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LIEUTENANT-GENERAL J. SPROT.

INCIDENTS AND ANECDOTES IN THE LIFE

OF

Lieut.-General John SPROT

Honorary Colonel of the Princess Louise's Argyll and Sutherland Highlanders

WHO SERVED TWENTY YEARS IN THE 83RD REGIMENT, NOW THE 1ST BATTALION ROYAL IRISH RIFLES, TWELVE OF WHICH WERE IN INDIA, INCLUDING ALL THROUGH THE MUTINY FROM THE BEGINNING TO THE END, IN CIVIL AND MILITARY EMPLOYMENTS

HE ALSO COMMANDED THE 91ST ARGYLLSHIRE HIGHLANDERS FOR SEVEN YEARS; WAS ASSISTANT ADJUTANT AND ASSISTANT QUARTERMASTER-GENERAL FOR SCOTLAND IN EDINBURGH

AND COMMANDED THE 31ST SURREY (SOUTH LONDON) BRIGADE DEPOT AT KINGSTON-ON-THAMES FOR FIVE YEARS; ALSO FOR A SHORT TIME THE MAIDSTONE BRIGADE DEPOT, NO. 46.

PRINTED FOR PRIVATE CIRCULATION ONLY.

1906.

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GORDON WILSON, PRINTER,
47 THISTLE STREET.

The House on the North Side of Clapham Common in which Lt.-Gen. Sprot was born on 12th March 1830.

The two Donkeys on which all General Sprot's Children learnt to ride and drive.

PRELIMINARY REMARKS.

When looking through the following pages I trust my Readers will do me the favour to remember three things:-

1st.

That this Book is published for Private Circulation only.

2nd.

That it was written, not for the purpose of glorifying myself, but to instruct, help, and guide my Children and my Children's Children in their early lives.

3rd.

Above all things, I should like it to be realised that an "Autobiography" must needs more or less partake of the egotistical, for let it be ever so carefully written the "I" must necessarily appear, do what one will to prevent it. This being so, I hope I may be acquitted of "Egotism."

J. SPROT.

List of some of the Papers and Pamphlets written by Lieut.-General Sprot on Military Subjects while serving.

1. Summary of his Indian Testimonials, 1858.

2. "Outpost Duty" for the use of the Officers and Men of the 91st Highlanders, 1872.

3. An Essay on "Recruiting" in competition for the Gold Medal of the United Service Institution, 1874.

4. "Fire Engine Drill" for the use of the 91st Highlanders when at Newry, Ireland, 1874.

5. "A Key to the Rules of the Kriegspiel" when in charge of the Kriegspiel Instruction at the Curragh Camp, 1875.

6. Revised Book of Standing Orders of 91st Highlanders after six years' experience, 1875.

7. Drill and Interior Economy for the use of the Auxiliary Forces while commanding the (Surrey) South London Brigade, 1880.

8. "Short Service and Division Depots," sent to the Commander-in-Chief and Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman, Bart., while Military Secretary in 1880.

9. "A Short History" of his military career for the Officers, N.-C.O.'s, and Men of the four Battalions, of which he was appointed Honorary Colonel in 1905.

10. "Some Indian Experiences," published weekly in the *Southern Reporter* (Selkirk) from 3rd February to end of May 1906.

11. Vol. I. of his own Autobiography, written for his own family and his private friends **only**, 1905.

THE WONDERFUL BOY OF OLD.

OH, much have I read in prose and verse,
And many a tale is told
That makes a fellow to-day seem worse
Than the wonderful boy of old:
A regular nugget without alloy,
His master's pride and his parents' joy,
A big-brained, muscular, model boy,
A wonderful boy of gold.

He could jump as far as a kangaroo,
And run like a hunted hare;
Whatever he said was brave and true,
Whatever he did was fair.
The "sapping" that makes your senses swim,
And your hair stand up, and your eyes grow dim,
Was a kind of jolly good joke to him—
He did it with time to spare.

Whenever he bowled he gained a hat
By scattering wickets three;
He punished the bowling and kept his bat
As straight as a bat could be.
Oh, the balls he slogged and the balls he snicked,
And the goals he saved and the goals he kicked,
And the blustering bullies he fought and licked,
Were a marvellous sight to see!

And now he's a Judge in a tip-top wig,
A Colonel, or College Don,
This wonderful boy who started big
And never stopped getting on;
For no one ever could call a halt
To the boy who was born without a fault—
Though I take the tiniest grain of salt
With the tale of the paragon.

But he kept a rule, if a thing seemed right—
I hope I may keep the same—
To go and do it with all his might
And hardly a thought of fame;
For it isn't the winning that makes a man,
But it's playing the game on the good old plan,
As hard and straight as a mortal can—
In fact it's playing the game.

DEDICATORY NOTE

To my Children and my Children's Children.

MANY of my friends and some of my acquaintances have urged me to write a short story of my life, and I do so in the hope that these anecdotes may prove finger-posts to guide you, should any of you be sufficiently ambitious to strive for advancement in life, which striving will surely lead to happiness, to honour, to distinction, and perhaps to glory.

I am not, however, writing to persuade any of you to adopt the Army as a profession, for your education, which I have endeavoured should be as scientific, and include as many and varied subjects, as possible, will have fitted you to do as well, perhaps better, in many other walks of life than in His Majesty's Service; what I am trying to point out is how best to succeed in any one of the numerous lines that a man (or woman, for I also include them certainly) can take up.

They who read this booklet, therefore, must not expect to find in it thrilling stories of bloody battles and hairbreadth escapes (though I have had my share of the latter), for my life has been that of an ordinary soldier officer of thirty-five years' active service, and it was not my fortune to be under fire more than once. During the Mutiny in Bengal my Regiment was in Bombay, and few, if any, of the officers went into action more than once—many not even once.

The going under fire is seldom obtained by our own seeking; it is simply our individual luck, while following our duty, and, in my opinion, it is a most undesirable thing for an officer to give up good service on the Staff, if he is there, in the hope of finding with his Regiment opportunities of being engaged in action which may never come.

In reading my Indian experience, some may say, "But what

has all this to do with a soldier's life? This is civilian's work." These, I will ask to remember that this civilian work, so to speak, was carried out in time of war quite alone (by myself) in the heart of the enemy's country, and for military purposes, and that the danger and risk run was far greater than that of an officer serving with his Regiment in the field in the ordinary way. It should also be known that, though employed in the erection of barracks for troops as well as being in charge of the fortifications, I had to take the field in the position of R.E. with any of the forces that entered my district.

My advice to those of you who have chosen or may choose a soldier's calling is never to neglect the opportunity of learning everything you can, and volunteering for everything out of the ordinary. When I joined I took care to apply for all kinds of employments. If any of the Regimental Staff went on leave I volunteered to do their duty during their absence, and took pleasure in sitting on all committees and courts-martial, or working at or studying or reading up anything that might help me to knowledge of the profession I had entered. In this way a young officer not only becomes very popular, but has a far better chance of being brought into notice than is likely to occur by sticking tight to his corps and his company duty only, as so many think desirable.

But whatever duties, civil or military, may be assigned to you in life, remember always that "Knowledge is Power," the great power that you will have to use as your most necessary tool. Industry, patience, order, and hard work must be learned and practised again and again; they do not come of themselves. No person can succeed who is not ambitious and enthusiastic, and who does not possess a decided will. You are likely to meet with opposition all around you, and should be prepared for it; never be discouraged, but try and try and try again. Nothing can be done without striving, but do not forget that it will be by the help of Almighty God alone that you will ultimately succeed, and without whom we can do nothing. If you fail, try again; if you succeed, give God the glory. During your whole life's struggle cease not to Pray, for Prayer is the essence of Religion, and let your motto ever be "I serve God and honour the King."

RIDDELL HOUSE.
The Property of Lieutenant-General Sprot.

UPPERTON HOUSE, EASTBOURNE.
The Seaside Residence of Lieutenant-General Sprot.

PREFACE.

AFTER I had written the manuscript of the first few pages, and found that the time I had to devote to my History was so very limited—for often week after week passed without my being able to make any progress whatever—and when I took into consideration the fact that I had already passed, according to scripture, the allotted age of man, it occurred to me that it was very probable, if I waited until the work was finished, it would never be published at all. I therefore determined to divide my work into sections as follows, so that I could from time to time bind up into volumes two or more sections, as I found it convenient, so that as much of the work as I could manage to write would at least be of use to my family and interest to my readers, even though the hand of God might take me away before all was completed. In this, my first volume, I bind together "My early Life" and "My Indian Experiences," and it is my intention to follow these two sections up by

SECTION III.

"At the Depôt at Chatham, and with the 83rd Regiment in England, Ireland, and at Gibraltar."

SECTION IV.

"Seven years in command of the 91st Argyllshire Highlanders."

SECTION V.

"Assistant Adjutant-General and Assistant Quartermaster-General for Scotland in Edinburgh, and in command of the 31st Surrey (South London) Brigade at Kingston-on-Thames, and the Maidstone Brigade Depôt, No. 46."

SECTION VI.

"I succeed to my Paternal Estates, and take up the management of my own broad acres."

SECTION VII.

"Am appointed to the Honorary Colonelcy of the Argyll and Sutherland Highlanders by the King and the Army Council."

This will be the end of my History, if it pleases Almighty God that I should live long enough to finish it.

J. SPROT, *Lt.-General.*

Xmas 1905.

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EXCERPT

FROM THE

"ARMY AND NAVY CHRONICLE,"

November 1905.

MAJOR-GENERAL and HON. LIEUT.-GENERAL J. SPROT, Hon. Colonel of the Princess Louise's Argyll and Sutherland Highlanders, the subject of our sketch, though not perhaps so well known to the military public as some of the more prominent of our veteran retired officers, has a record of useful service that any man may be proud to own. Lieutenant-General Sprot joined the 83rd Regiment, afterwards "County of Dublin," and now 1st Battalion Royal Irish Rifles, as Ensign in September 1848, and, after a varied service of forty years, retired from the Army with the rank of Lieutenant-General at the end of 1887.

On joining his Regiment in November 1848, he found himself in the midst of the Irish Rebellion, in which Smith O'Brien took so prominent a part, but the Regiment shortly afterwards embarked for India. During the early part of his Indian career, Lieutenant Sprot proved himself a devotee to sport, being a good shot and an excellent horseman. After five years' service in Poona, Scinde, and Gujerat, he joined the Military College at Poona, and shortly afterwards accepted an appointment in the Public Works Department. He here introduced an interesting and novel, but entirely successful innovation, by declining to make use of any but free labour, and this had the effect of reducing the cost in the construction of public works. On the Mutiny breaking out he joined his Regiment, and was appointed Brigade-Major to a Field Force operating in Rajpootana, receiving the Indian (Mutiny) War Medal 1857-58. For his services in the Public Works Department he received the commendation of the Bombay Government on three occasions, and once that of the Supreme Government of India, when he was mentioned by General Roberts, commanding

in Rajpootana, in his despatches of May 1858, while serving in that province. Returning to England in May 1860, on sick leave, he obtained his majority in February 1867. He went on temporary half-pay in the same year, and visited the principal capitals and Armies of Europe, with a view to studying their military systems. In 1869 Major Sprot rejoined the active Army, buckling on the claymore of the 91st Highlanders (Argyllshire), and, before the end of the year, succeeded to the command of that famous corps, which he retained until the beginning of 1876.

During the period of his command the Regiment formed a Guard of Honour on the occasion of the wedding of the Princess Louise and the Marquis of Lorne, at Windsor Castle, to commemorate which the Regiment was granted, by desire of Queen Victoria, the additional title of "Princess Louise's" Argyllshire Highlanders. On relinquishing command of his Regiment, Colonel Sprot was appointed Assistant Adjutant-General and Assistant Quartermaster-General for Scotland, and afterwards commanded the 31st Regimental District, Surrey (South London) Brigade, at Kingston-on-Thames, which he held until 1882, when, after some months on half-pay, he was in due course promoted Major-General on the active list. In this rank he was unable to accept any appointment, though more than one was offered him, owing to his succeeding at this time to a large estate in Roxburghshire, in which County he is a Justice of the Peace and Deputy-Lieutenant, and where he has now resided for over twenty years. On the 2nd of May last he was appointed Hon. Colonel of his old Regiment, the Princess Louise's Argyll and Sutherland Highlanders. Lieutenant-General Sprot is the writer of many useful military pamphlets.

INCIDENTS AND ANECDOTES IN THE LIFE

OF

LIEUT.-GENERAL SPROT.

1st Section.

Chapter I.

1840 to 1848.

MY SCHOOLDAYS.

IN 1836 my younger brother, Mark, and I commenced lessons together under a governess, a very nice creature, who taught us a great deal. She stayed with us two years, and in 1838 a tutor came to us, whose name I forget; he took a great fancy to me, and devoted most of his attention to me, and got me well up into the higher branches of arithmetic, euclid, and algebra long before I went to school, even as young as I then was, viz.—Eight years old.

In 1840, when I was just ten years of age, I was sent to a large private school at Stanwix's, close to Carlisle. My masters took me by the hand, and, pleased with my proficiency in mathematics, pushed me forward, devoting much time and attention to me.

Here I must make a digression to say that I attribute much of my success in life to keeping always on the best of terms with my schoolmasters, and trying to please them at all times; they did not then hesitate to pay extra attention to me, and this feeling occurred in every school I was ever at until I passed out of the Normal Military School at Poona under my dear old friend, Major Scrivener, through whose kindness and attention I was enabled to stand first in every subject every week, from the time I entered with some thirty or forty officers and a few N.-C.O.'s until—this having been noticed—I was taken away before the end of the term and given a 4th class Executive Engineer's appointment in the Public Works, with my choice of any district I preferred in the Bombay Presidency. (But of this more will be heard further on.)

In 1842 I was sent to the "Grange" at Sunderland, a most popular school among the noblemen and gentlemen of the South of Scotland. There it was that Sir David Baird (or his brother Archie) was drowned while bathing, and there my great friendship with Sir William Scott of Ancrum was made.

About 1844 my great-uncle, Mr Edward Shewell, brother of Colonel Frederick Shewell, the Balaklava hero, with two or three other gentlemen, founded the Cheltenham College, and as soon as it was fairly started I was sent there and placed in the modern department.

There were no military examinations for the Army at all in those days, but much attention was given at the college to military instruction, *i.e.* — Fortification, surveying, modelling fortification and field-works in sand (of which I was myself appointed head), gymnastics of a sort, fencing and such things. There I learnt a great deal, and there also I still feel myself so much indebted to many of my masters that I cannot forbear mentioning it.

In 1846, after two years of Cheltenham, I was sent to a crammer's at Sydenham, in front of where the Crystal Palace now stands. It was a preparatory school for Addiscombe (the East India Company's College, near Croyden, where they prepared officers for the Indian Army), but there were only about a dozen boys, and our freedom was much greater than at any other school I had been at. We shot birds in the hedges with a single-barrelled gun, and twice a-week we had a drag hunt with a red herring and a curly black retriever all over the surrounding country; two small boys trailed the drag, and after half-an-hour's start the rest of us followed. I believe they were indebted to me for the suggestion—at least, I well remember training the old dog in the garden, and tying up the red herring in a muslin bag before the youngsters started. The people in the neighbourhood of Sydenham and Forest Hill were very kind to us, quite entering into the fun, and we were never molested but once. Then we were apprehended by two great burly fellows, who told us they were gentlemen's keepers, and would not let us or our dog go until they had emptied all our pockets of every farthing we had amongst us. I don't think they got much, for they never tried it again.

Here again my masters helped me well forward, and by the time I left, at the end of the year, not only was I extremely well up in conic sections and analytical trigonometry, but had passed quite through the differential calculus and was well into the integral ditto. So noticeable had my performances been in mathematics, military engineering, plan drawing, gunnery, &c., that an old gentlemen,

father of one of the boys, offered me a nomination to Addiscombe, a thing much sought after, if my parents would allow me to accept it. They declined, however, saying that nothing would induce them to allow a son of theirs to go out to India.

Unquestionably, the time I learnt the most was while under a private tutor at home from eight to ten years' old, and while at this crammer's from sixteen to seventeen. I had then the masters almost entirely to myself, and comparing that with public schools, where all the classes contain twenty-five to thirty boys, it is clear that more will be learnt at a crammer's in one year than in four or five years at a public school. I am inclined to believe too that a change of school is of advantage to the pupil; two years is quite long enough to be at any one school. We had more appliances at Cheltenham than any school I ever saw, and that was of immense advantage.

The ordinary public schools may do for moneyed men who will afterwards lead a life of leisure, but they are not suited for those who will lead a useful life. They are not fit for preparing men for the Army, Navy, or the Civil Service, or even for the colonies. One year at a public school in a boy's whole schooling will be useful, but certainly not more. My father held this opinion, and the experience of my own life and the lives of my children, which I have anxiously watched, bear out the same thing.

There are a large number of persons who talk of the immense advantage of "a good grounding" (in one or two things) for a young man. My experience tells me that a smattering of a great many things is preferable; just a sufficient smattering to enable the young man to work up by himself alone a subject with the aid of books when it is required. Then the young man can take up any one of his numerous subjects in after life that may be of most use to him. He may live to be a hundred before the one—the only one—or two well-grounded subjects become of the smallest use to him, and possibly not even then. Young men should be encouraged to write to the papers on any and on every subject; it is an excellent training, and it was in this way that the late Lord Salisbury, following the advice of his mother, acquired his skill in dialectics. He should never, however, write in his own name if it is wished to argue a subject out. The moment a man writes in his own name the matter becomes a personal one, and wrangling and denunciation too often take the place of sound, sensible, unbiassed reasoning—this should be avoided. Many persons abuse the man who writes under a "*nom de plume*." Nonsense! What does it signify whether the writer is Jack, Tom, or Harry if the argument is a good one?

I am inclined to believe that at the majority of private schools

the boys get more than enough to eat, and their having wine, beer, and sometimes spirits at that early age is all wrong. Alcohol certainly stunts the growth. But the games and the play-fields, gymnastics of all sorts, and bicycling are most commendable, and horse riding also if it can be got. The extension motions should be daily practised at schools, and military drill once or twice a-week.

The dead languages should be absolutely excluded until the pupil is eighteen; then if he has time to waste he can indulge in them. The idea of a public school being a place where many nice friendships are made seems, from my experience, very doubtful. Boys get the rough edges rubbed off them, but as for learning much or making many desirable friends, that is a thing I am quite sceptical about.

To return, however, to my own education. In 1847, at the end of my year at Sydenham, it was thought advisable that my attention should be turned to modern languages, and, after due consideration, I was sent to Dresden to learn German. I have found very little use for German, and that mainly while travelling in Russia (St. Petersburg and Moscow). I have always regretted that my parents did not select a French town for me, but to Dresden I was sent, and this is how I managed to get there.

My father, who was always very kind to me, accompanied me on this occasion to Leith, and saw me on board a Hamburg steamer, with written directions how to go and a little money in my pocket. In due time we arrived at Hamburg, where I found out an hotel and stayed a week, seeing all the sights of the town, aided by a German waiter who could speak a little English. At the end of the week, having booked my place in a river steamer, I started up the Elbe for Magdeburg. It took three days, and such dreary three days, thank goodness, I have never spent since. We passed continually between two high banks, over which could be seen only the tips of the everlasting poplar trees. Not a word of English could anyone speak, and I could not speak German, so I had to keep silent during all the voyage. I slept at an hotel in Madgeburg, and on the following day took train for Leipsic and Dresden, where I was met at the railway station by Dr. Krause, my headmaster.

After about a year at Dr. Krause's in the Alterstadt, by which time I had learnt to speak German pretty well, I went into lodgings on the other side of the river, where masters gave me lessons in drawing, painting, music, and such things.

While here the Rebellion of 1848 broke out, and a rising of the people took place in Dresden as well as in Berlin, which I went out to see. By this time my younger brother, Mark, had taken my

place at Dr. Krause's, and he, with another English boy, though forbidden to leave the school precincts, were determined to go out and see what the fun was. They broke a vine pole in two, with which they armed themselves, and, climbing over the wall, soon joined the rebels. But their fun was turned very shortly into grief, for the Dresden police swept them with their noisy friends into their net, and carried them off to prison. After some little delay my brother got a message conveyed to me, begging me to come and get them out. This was not so easily done; the authorities, in reply to my explanation, said if they let them out the others would clamour to be let out also, and this could not be, so they kept them locked up for about two days, but gave them a room to themselves as they were English, and treat them well all the time.

I shortly afterwards returned to England, leaving my brother still at Dr. Krause's, and here our paths in life diverged for ever. He also chose the Army as a profession, and was in the 93rd Highlanders, which Regiment is now linked with my own old 91st, and was all through the Crimean War. He was also in India during the Mutiny, but was struck down with fever at Benares, and was invalided home. He tried the climate of Algiers, but that could not restore his health, and he died at Vevey in 1858.

Chapter II.

1848-9.

TRANSFER FROM AND RE-TRANSFER TO THE 83rd REGIMENT.

INTERVIEW WITH THE DUKE OF WELLINGTON.

IN the year 1848 I returned from Germany, and, on my way home to Riddell, came in for seeing something of the Chartist troubles in London. I happened to be in Trafalgar Square on the top of an omnibus when the procession of Chartists passed by from the House of Commons after presenting their gigantic petition.

During the summer my father took me a driving trip in the pony-chaise, with a pair of ponies, one a piebald, to the west country —Dumfries, Kirkcudbright, and Wigtownshire. We went by the Yarrow and St. Mary's Loch, and visited many friends and relatives there.

When we returned, after a pleasant time of more than a month, my parents thought it now advisable that I should decide what profession in life I would follow, and I well remember being called into the deep centre window of the old dining-room, and the question being put to me, "What would you like to be?" My first answer was "a surgeon," but that my mother flatly refused to allow me to become. I then suggested "an engineer," as I had, in a way, been preparing myself for that calling. But this did not meet with their approval either, so I left it to themselves to decide, and when they suggested "the Army," I made no objection whatever.

This being settled, my father mounted his horse and rode over to Bowhill with the object of asking the Duke of Buccleuch if he could assist him to obtain a Commission for me in Her Majesty's Army, and so willingly did he accede to this request that in less than a fortnight the official communication arrived informing my father that, on his making a payment of £500, his son would receive the much coveted Commission.

The next step to be taken after that was to ascertain which was the best Regiment for me to serve in. For this purpose my father applied to an uncle, Colonel Frederick Shewell, then commanding

the 8th Hussars, at that time quartered at Newbridge. This was that Colonel Shewell who afterwards so valiantly brought the Light Brigade out of the Balaklava charge, a full account of which will be found in the third volume of Kinglake's *History of the Crimean War.*

Colonel Shewell had no difficulty in recommending the 83rd Regiment, which then, as now, was one of the corps *d'elite*, so an application was made to the Horse Guards that my Commission should be made out for that corps. It was at that time commanded by Sir Henry Dundas (afterwards Lord Melville), who had exchanged from the Guards as Captain and Lieut.-Colonel. He served also in a Battalion of the 60th Rifles in India, and afterwards met his old Regiment, by whom he was much beloved, at Poona, and stayed a week with us.

I was gazetted on the 19th September 1848, and joined the following November at the expiration of the usual two months' leave, after paying a visit to my uncle at the 8th Hussars Barracks. A young fellow named Dickenson, who was my senior by a few days, joined at the same time, and, after being introduced to the Colonel and officers, we, the two new ensigns, received each a soldier's jacket and were sent to learn our drill with the rest of the young soldier recruits.

The 83rd Regiment was then quartered at Fermoy, and this was a fine time for recruiting, as the Irish Famine had reduced the poor to such a state of starvation that thousands of fine young men threw themselves at the feet of the recruiting sergeants. Three or four times a-day the recruiting sergeants would bring in twenty or twenty-five splendid young men; one, or, perhaps, two, would be selected by the medical officer, and the rest sent back to what they called their homes. For the 83rd over six hundred strapping fellows were taken, and when they had been fully drilled and were fully grown it was not surprising to hear once the general officer inspecting the Regiment say in his speech on parade, "Colonel and gentlemen, I have inspected your Regiment with pleasure, and I have inspected many others, but I have no hesitation in saying of yours that your men are the finest and steadiest under arms I have ever seen, and your officers are inferior to none."

We were under orders to embark for the Cape of Good Hope, and were moving down to the coast for that purpose, when the news of the reverses in the Punjaub (the second Sikh War) came as a great shock to the kingdom. The destination of the Regiment was instantly altered, and, together with the 64th and 73rd similarly situated, it was ordered to India forthwith.

Now, in those days, when a Regiment was ordered to India, it

was customary to augment the number of officers (and men), one lieutenant being added to the cadre of each company and an additional lieutenant-colonel to the Regiment. When the Gazette came out, for which the officers were anxiously looking, all the ensigns were promoted but two—Ensign Dickenson and myself. Moreover, to my astonishment, I found myself (without the slightest knowledge of any such intention) transferred from the 83rd to the 82nd. This was a great blow; in the first place, to be removed from the Regiment I had begun to love, and where I should have been second on the list of ensigns to the bottom of the list of a strange Regiment; and in the second place, to be deprived of the chance of going on active service—a prospect delightful to every keen young soldier.

In this dilemma, as soon as it was known why the destination of the Corps had been altered, I applied to my Colonel for help and advice (for it is to his Colonel that every young officer should look when in difficulties). He at once advised me to go to London to see the Duke. Needless to say that the Duke referred to was the Duke of Wellington, to whom he gave me a letter explaining the position.

On the following day, armed with this letter, I started for London along with Captain Gage, brother of Lord Gage, who was also going over. We drove in an Irish car from Fermoy to Tipperary, then the terminus of the Great Southern and Western Railway to Dublin and Kingstown, and crossed the Channel *via* Holyhead to London, where I stayed with my grandfather in St. John's Wood. On the following morning I proceeded to the Horse Guards for the purpose of asking for an interview with the Military Secretary. This was Lord Henry Somerset, afterwards created Lord Raglan during the Crimean War, who, after hearing and examining into my case, informed me that the transfer had been made at the express wish of my father, and that, therefore, before anything could be done in the matter, I must, if anxious to be put back into my old Corps and to go with it on field service to India, first obtain my father's consent. I then left the office, and at once wrote to my father, explaining the state of affairs and requesting his permission to go to India with my Regiment under such unusual and felicitous circumstances.

The reply, though only partially satisfactory, was received by me with great joy. My father informed me that if I wished to go on active service I might go, but that he was very much displeased and would no longer give me the £150 a-year he then allowed me. (A threat, by the way, which he carried out till the last year of my stay in India.)

This letter I took as soon as received to the Military Secretary, and was told that the Duke would see me on the following Thursday. When that day came I presented myself, according to these instructions, at the door of the private office of the Duke in the Horse Guards, and was shortly ushered into the presence of the great man by one of the messengers.

The Duke was walking up and down his room, looking exactly like the pictures one so often sees of him, especially that one wherein he is represented as riding under the archway of the Horse Guards with a groom behind him, and returning the salute of the sentries.

On seeing me enter, he told me that he had read my petition, and was greatly pleased at my pluck and military zeal. He patted me on the head quite paternally: "This is what I like" he said, "this is how I like to see things done by you boys. I wish that more young men had the same strong feeling in the matter that you have. You shall certainly go, but how can we manage to put you back? That will be a difficult matter."

I then explained that the senior ensign, Dickenson, was under age, and could not rightly, according to the regulations, be promoted to lieutenant, and that, had I not been transferred, I should have stood next below him. If, however, the Duke would see fit to promote Dickenson, I could go into his place without anyone being the sufferer, for, if Dickenson were not promoted, another lieutenant would be brought from half pay or from some other regiment to serve in the 83rd. The Duke approved of this suggestion, and said that orders should be given for me to rejoin the 83rd at Cork.

I returned to Ireland immediately, and went on with my drill and instruction until I sailed with the last detachment from the Cove of Cork on St. Patrick's Day in the morning—1849.

We were bound for Bombay, but there was nothing eventful in the three months' voyage. We saw no land except the Peak of Teneriffe, and that was in a cloud. We had, however, the usual experience of a storm in the Bay of Biscay, and saw the phosphorescent light on the sea off the Gold Coast, and we youngsters bathed in it by the moonlight. We were introduced to the trade winds that took us, to our astonishment, right over the Atlantic, not many miles off Brazil, and brought us back to Teneriffe. We crossed the Line, of course, but had no to-do about it; then, in rounding the Cape, we had the big waves running truly mountains high, but we were a hundred miles or more from the coast, and did not catch even a glimpse of Table Mountain. In passing up the Mozambique Channel we saw neither the shore of South Africa nor

of Madagascar. Here some boobies sat upon the mast-head; these, with the large albatross, the little Mother Carey's chickens (which we had with us most of the voyage), the pretty Cape pigeons, some schools of whales and porpoises, and one (only one) shark, make up the total of birds and fishes.

Being full of zeal in my new profession, I had come provided with a box of little wooden soldiers in companies, sub-divisions, and sections; the authorised drill-book; some other books of the same sort; and MacDougall on Strategy and on Tactics. These I assiduously studied up, and worked my little wooden men daily on the top of the hencoops. But this did not fill up half my time, so I learnt every rope, every spar, every pin on the ship, and, when that was over, took to studying navigation, and did so with great success. The Captain's sextant and its uses were as familiar as my pocket knife; each morning I took my sights, and located our position on the earth's surface. When we finally reached Bombay we could not get hold of a pilot, so, under the supervision of my friend the Captain, I took the good ship, "Zion's Hope," into Bombay Harbour one night by observation of the fixed stars.

I was very proud of this performance, for I was sure there were few ensigns in the British Army in those days who could have done that stroke of business.

On landing at Bombay on the 20th June 1849, my first thought was to look at the *Gazette*, and there I found that a few days after the last detachment had left the Cove of Cork Ensign Dickenson was promoted to be lieutenant, and that I was re-transferred to the 83rd—in my old place.

In a subsequent *Gazette*, my name also appeared as lieutenant, just seven months after my joining.

This is a picture of the "Zion's Hope," 600 ton, in which Ensign John Sprot of the 83rd (now 1st Batt. Royal Irish Rifles) went to India with his Company (No. 3) in 1849. She was purchased from America for the purpose of taking out the last detachment. She sailed from "Cove of Cork" on St. Patrick's Day, and was navigated into Bombay Harbour by the fixed stars by Ensign Sprot on night of 20th June without a pilot.

Chapter III.

1850.

SHOOTING—RIDING DOWN "COLD DEER" ON HORSEBACK.

ALL our family have been good shots always, and good billiard players too; indeed, good at all those games where the hand is called upon to obey the eye. Mr Edward Shewell, my great-uncle, mentioned before as assisting to found the Cheltenham College, was a notable billiard player in the South of England; so was his brother Frederick, the Balaklava hero; my own brother Edward was quite as notable in the same way in the South of Scotland and Edinburgh, and they were all excellent game shots.

My brother Mark and I were not allowed to have or use a gun when boys, but, just before we went to school, we clubbed our pocket-money together and bought a single-barrelled gun from Birmingham for a pound. Every evening we used to prowl about round the woods which abound at Riddell and shoot rabbits, and so expert did we become that I may safely say if we saw a rabbit within shot for a moment we were sure to kill him; indeed, with that light little gun I did not miss one shot in a hundred. We never shot so well with any other gun afterwards, but I wonder, when I think of it, how it is I am alive to tell the story, for among the many dangerous tricks this little gun played, one was that of blowing the hammer up to full cock every shot we fired.

My father, who was an excellent shot himself, gave me one of his old guns later on, and I used to shoot with it during the holidays. Before going out to India I bought from Dickson of Edinburgh a twelve-bore, two-grooved rifle, which carried a belted ball. There were no long-ranged rifles, with conical or cylindrical balls, in those days; they were the offspring of the Crimean War—1854.

These two guns I took out with me to India, and few guns had harder work to do than they, for, in the whole 83rd Regiment, there was at that time no keener sportsman than myself. Poor things, they never reached home again however, for the vessel in which I had shipped them, together with the rest of my battery, relics, and many Indian valuables, was wrecked off the French coast; skins,

skulls, horns, books, presents from the native Rajahs, plans, instruments, drawings, and other treasures all went down to the bottom of the sea just opposite the Dover Citadel, where, by that time, I was quartered. With the help of a good telescope I was nearly able from my barrack window to see the rock that the good ship split upon. Nothing was saved to me but the insurance of £120 on some Bombay black wood furniture out of at least £500 of goods altogether, most of which could never be replaced.

But to return to my story. After landing at Bombay, my company, then commanded by Captain Anderson (of East Lothian, now an old General officer living in London, who not long ago was Governor of Sandhurst), marched to Poona *via* Khandalla, and as soon as we had landed on *terra firma* out came my old 14-bore Joe Manton.

It was 75 miles to Poona, which took us six days; we marched at night, and all day long I prowled about in the heat of the sun shooting anything and everything I could get my gun upon, but the most remarkable things in my bag were, after all, only a few cockyollibirds.

When we reached Poona it was nothing but drill and duty for me. After six months or more, however, I managed to get ten days' leave to go into the jungles, and, as none of my brother officers cared about shooting, I started off by myself with some natives into the Ghauts, and managed, besides some small game, to kill a buffalo, the horns of which are now adorning the dining-room mantelpiece at Riddell.

About six months after reaching Poona the Adjutant thought that we (the young officers) were sufficiently advanced in our drill to be dismissed, and so one day we were ordered before the Colonel for examination. He saw us drilled, and he saw us drill a squad and company, and then he said a few words to us all and dismissed us, but me he called back and especially complimented me on my performances. (So much for the "little tin soldiers" on the hen-coops of the "Zion's Hope.") He finished off by saying "You are rather young for such a distinction (I was then nineteen), but I am going to post you to the Light Company of the Regiment, and you will appear in orders to-night." This was indeed an honour for me, and on the strength of it I wrote off to my mother, who took the first opportunity of letting the Duke of Buccleuch know how his protegé was progressing, and he in time sent me a kind message of encouragement.

As there is no such thing as a Light Company in Regiments now, I must explain that in those days we had ten companies in a

battalion; eight of them were styled "Battalion Companies," and the other two were called the "Flank Companies." One of them, the right flank company, was composed of the tallest and handsomest men in the Regiment and was called the "Grenadier Company." It was instituted in the Peninsular War, and its *raison d'etre* was to throw hand grenades over the parapets, a thing which required in most cases tall men. They wore small hand grenades on their caps, collars, belts, &c., as badges of distinction, and the shako ornament (pompom or ball) was red. The other, the left flank company, which was called the Light Company, was selected for activity and intelligence only; their roll was to "skirmish" in loose order, *i.e.*, light drill, taking advantage of cover and creeping unseen as close to the enemy as possible and using their rifles with great precision. Their badge of distinction was a bugle, and their head ornament was green. Both the flank companies wore "wings" on the shoulders, while the battalion companies had epaulets. They were very proud of their distinctions and ornaments, and it was the custom through the service for both officers and men to look down upon the battalion companies, which they contemptuously termed "Grabby."

During the two years we were quartered at Poona I frequently went into the jungles, mostly by myself, but sometimes accompanied by a brother officer, who, though he often cared little or nothing for shooting, was not averse to ten days' outing, and on those occasions we shot black buck, chinkara (gazelle), partridge, snipe, wild duck, hares, &c.

Also I frequently practised at a mark with my smooth bore and bullets preparatory to going out on shooting excursions, and found the advantage of having gone through this practice for a few days so great that I should advise everyone to do the same. A man who cares about shooting well should *always*, without exception, carry his own rifle in jungle shooting in his own hands, whether on foot or on horseback; the difference is extraordinary. Besides, in wild game shooting many an opportunity that never returns is lost if one has to get one's gun from a carrier after the quarry shows itself. These things should be laid down as a rule for every young shikari to follow.

At this period—1850—there were great discussions in Poona at the different messes as to whether it were possible to ride down a black buck that had not been wounded. It had been frequently tried, they said, but no one had ever succeeded; the deer went away at a great pace, and the horse was pumped before he could come up with him. I took the other side and argued, viz., that if the horse

was in good hard condition, being fed upon corn and hay and well exercised, and properly handled, he should win.

Well, one fine day I was out shooting in the valley of the Moota-Moola below Poona, and was walking over a great plain, when my attention was drawn to a pair of black buck coming along at a "hand gallop" towards me. I quickly moved behind a little round knoll close to where I was and crouched down watching them. On they came together till within two hundred yards of my hiding place, and behind them, lolloping along, came two wolves running together. The sight of the deer passing so near was too tempting, and, as they galloped by, I fired one barrel of my two-grooved rifle at them, but missed. Then they started off at score, separating; the wolves pulled up short and sat on their haunches, looking about them, while I remained lying down where I was.

Soon in the distance the two bucks joined company again and kept on till they disappeared on the horizon, and the wolves having again taken up the running, I watched them till all were out of sight; then I reloaded my Dickson (we had no breechloaders in those days), and, ruminating over what I had seen, reasoned thus:—"Certainly these wolves mean to catch those black buck or they would never have persevered on like that; and when one thinks of it, it is just the way to succeed. A nice, easy hand gallop—those in the best condition *must win*, and it won't be the black buck."

Not long after this I was on a shooting expedition south of Rajkot, at the edge of the Ghir. This was a wide stretch of primeval forest, inhabited only by wild animals, except in the summer season when the villagers drove in their flocks and herds to feed. I had gone there in the hope of—peradventure—getting a lion; but, though they were once in plenty in those parts, they had now become very few and far between. On the days when no big game was to be heard of, I usually turned my attention to hares and partridges, common or "painted," or to black buck and gazelle. On one of these occasions I fired at a very fine buck and heard distinctly the bullet "tell," but he went off and joined the herd, seeming nothing the worse. However, I changed my rifle for a horse and spear, and galloping straight at the herd, soon singled out the buck and made after him, not as hard as we could go, but at an easy hand gallop, just as I had observed the wolves going. In twenty-five minutes I came up with him, dead beat, at the end of four or five miles. There he stood, with his head hanging down, about a dozen yards from me, but, whenever I made at him, he jumped to one side out of my way and avoided the spear. At last I caught him on the backbone, just above his tail, sending

him head over heels. In a moment I was off my grey Arab, "Perinda," and, before he could get fairly up, had him by the horn, when my shikari knife performed its usual duty. The bullet had gone through the skin of the hock, and practically the deer was unhurt by it. Afterwards, I frequently rode after black buck without firing at them at all, and generally succeeded in bringing them home. "Perinda," the name of my horse, is the Persian for a "bird," and I had trained him so well that when I got off and left him standing he never attempted to run away, but waited my return, however long, sometimes following and neighing after me. He was very fast, so his name Perinda, the Persian for "a bird," was appropriate. I bought him out of one of the Persian Gulf dhows at Bombay one day. He was then a three-year-old, and I had him for ten years, selling him when I left India for quite as much as I gave for him. Not only did I ride down several black buck on him, but did a great deal of pig-sticking. He was first-rate at that, and would always bring one up to the boar on the spear side. One day on the "Hub" river we killed six in one day. I have shot several cheetah off him, and once speared a panther, but only once. I never tried that game again, and would advise no one who valued his horse or his own life to try it. He was a very enduring horse; once I rode him fifty miles—from Deesa to Mount Aboo—and back the next morning, a hundred miles within thirty-six hours. Another day I rode him from the landing place in Bombay Harbour to Poona straight away—seventy-five miles. We started at four in the morning; breakfasted at a rest-house about eight, and halted an hour; halted two hours at Khandala for dinner, and rode into the Gorporee lines, then occupied by the 78th Highlanders, as the gurries (gongs) were striking twelve midnight. The horse was as fresh as paint, neighed when he heard the sound, broke into a trot, and went straight off to our old bungalow without hesitation.

Chapter IV.

1853.

RACE RIDING AND PIG-STICKING.

I WAS born a Cockney—that is to say within sound of Bow Bells, and Clapham Common was where I first saw the light.

Cockneys are not usually considered good riders, but, in my case, I did not remain long in my birthplace, for I was carted off as a baby of a few months old in a great lumbering chariot, posting all the way from London to Riddell, a journey which then occupied ten days. There were no railways in those times, but the crossing of Chatmoss, between Liverpool and Manchester, was being pretty generally discussed.

As soon as my backbone was strong enough to enable me to sit up with the help of a red silk pocket handkerchief of great size, I was put into a chair saddle with arms and a foot-board, still to be seen at Riddell stables' harness-room. Thus tightly tied up and placed on the back of a very small Shetland pony named Sweep, I was led about the roads and grounds of this lovely place, accompanied by my nurse. My father was then a great horse-breeder, and annually reared, under the supervision of his head groom, old John Woodger (father of Mark, and grandfather of the present John Woodger) a dozen or twenty horses of sorts. Some thirty brood mares and foals could always be seen in the fields and in the parks north of the house, so my readers will understand how, from my earliest recollections, I was always among horses. Under these circumstances, it was not surprising if, by the time I joined Her Majesty's Army, I was an excellent rider, as well across country as on the flat.

When I first joined I had no horses, but very soon after reaching India I became the happy possessor of two—a bright bay Arab and a little brown pony, such a trotter as never was seen. He was a thick-set, stumpy little beast, and went by the name of "Little Ugly," but, when I offered in Bombay and Scinde to make a match, inches for inches, for ₹500 a-side, owners up, there were no takers.

The Arab, a nice, handsome, bright bay horse, very soon came to an end. One day we made up a party of four to spend a week under canvas in the jungle, and I took with me, as well as the horses, a very useful white Persian greyhound which I had bought from a Cabulee Caffella that had brought him down from Afghanistan.

The horse's death happened in this way. When wandering about one morning on the plain, we came across a herd of small deer, and slipped the greyhound at them. Off we went over the plain at a good hunting gallop. The horse was in capital condition, and did his work well and with ease to himself. When the greyhound caught one of the deer, and we all began to pull up, he suddenly stretched out his neck and neighed, then stood still, staggered, and fell dead; he had died from heart complaint.

It was after that I bought Perinda, the white Arab you have heard of before.

Besides being, so to speak, brought up in the saddle, I had another great advantage over my brother officers in my being a very light weight. On racing occasions I have got up as light as 8 st. 12 lbs. without training, but my normal weight until I was over fifty years old was always about 9 st. 4 lbs. So it was not surprising that young Sprot was in pretty fair demand as a jockey. Riding with good judgment, I was always very successful, and on one occasion, at a three days' meeting at Kurrachee, I well remember riding in and winning twelve races out of sixteen.

At pig-sticking I was equally successful, and cannot call to mind that I ever found anyone who could take the spear away from me. (It is said of a man that he "got the spear" or "took the spear" when he was the first to draw blood.)

One time at Kurrachee, where the 83rd were quartered for four years after leaving Poona, I got together a party of four or five to go pig-sticking on the lower bank of the Hub River in Beloochistan, not many miles from the camp, but across the border, where we pitched a couple of tents. The place was literally swarming with pigs that lived in the "jow" jungle lining the river banks, and they came out to feed in the plain beyond. I never shall forget the sight I saw when, after breakfast the first day, I climbed up a small conical hill with a brother officer and looked through a bush over the top. There in the plain below were hundreds. Close within sight were five or six old sows, each with a "sounder" of eight or nine little ones feeding

away, and here and there, dotted over the ground, several old boars, each by himself, grubbing away most industriously.

After a bit we came down from the hill, collected our forces, mounted our steeds, and led by your humble servant, made a dash into the middle of them—"each man for himself, and God for us all."

To see the pigs all running for the river-side was a wonderful sight, and not the least wonderful part was to see how quietly they all disappeared. However, I had in the meantime succeeded in possessing myself of a little porker and a fat old boar, one of whose tusks I have now somewhere, and the other I had mounted in gold, and afterwards gave to my wife as a needle-holder to wear on her chatelaine.

There was another adventure I had the next day which I often remember.

In that desert land it was most difficult to get beaters, and, as soon as the wild pig had got into the jungle, they would never come out again. We were almost leaving to return to camp, when, quite by accident, I hit on a Freemason among the few Scindee men whom curiosity had brought to our camp, and he undertook to collect some beaters for us the next day. This he did; so with these we went forth, and were able, by judicious management, to beat out some pigs. We killed six that morning; then we tried it again, but the animals had thoroughly taken alarm, and it was only with difficulty we could find any at all. After some hunting about however, the beaters forced two old boars out at the end of a patch of jungle, where we all stood waiting, mounted and spear in hand.

Out they came together, but, on seeing us, they divided, one going into the open, and the other taking the bed of the river. Two of our party went to the right, into the open, while another and myself took to the left and followed the one that went down the stream. Very soon I took the spear, and in a second more my friend and his horse went a terrible cropper in the gravel. I pulled up to ascertain the damage, and found he was very much hurt but able to walk, so I galloped on after my boar. He was crossing the river when I came up with him; for a moment I hesitated to follow, as the place I knew was full-of quicksands, but, saying to myself, "Where that heavy old boar with his little feet can go my horse should be able to carry me," I closely followed his footsteps, and got safe to land on the other side.

Here was a lovely piece of flat turf, and I was soon alongside my old friend; but now came an unexpected difficulty. My own

spear had got broken the day before, and I had borrowed one from a friend—a short Bengalee one of which he was very proud, heavily loaded with lead at the butt, and used quite differently from the Bombay spears. The thrust with the latter is a forward poke, but, with the Bengalee one, the spear is "jobbed" down perpendicularly, and all this was new to me. I tried the poking unsuccessfully, the thing being too short; then I tried the jobbing, and, striking the old fellow on the backbone with great force, broke the "salem" head of my friend's weapon short off. Here was a go! What was to be done? How could I ever find that head again in this wide jungle of scrub and sandy mounds? Taking thought for a moment, I jumped off Perinda, selected the nearest sand-heap, stuck the spear handle upright into it, and, tying my pocket handkerchief to the top, rode on unarmed, following the track of the boar in the sand. After half-a-mile or so I came up to him again in a small jhil or swamp, sitting on his haunches behind a bush, and looking very much the worse for his severe treatment. But now what was to be done? I had nothing but my knife, and the beast was at bay, with his back to the bush in at least a foot of water. If I left him to go (goodness knows where!) for help, where would he be when I returned? I was at my wits' end, and sat down for a minute to think and listen—for in the jungle that is the best thing to do when in difficulty—while my horse fed on the stunted herbage near by. Presently I heard the sound of an axe, and, mounting again, went off in search, and soon found an old Beloochee cutting wood which he was making into billets for transportation to Kurrachee. After some little difficulty, I persuaded him to accompany me back to the swamp, and, as his legs were bare, tried to get him to go in and finish off the ugly-looking animal; but he did not seem to see this in a proper light, so it ended by my taking his axe, wading in, and killing the boar with one blow on the skull.

The next step was to go back and look for the broken spear and its "salem" head. This was done by tracking the footsteps of my horse and the pig backwards on the sandy plain till the white flag was found. I then searched for and soon discovered the bloody head; after which my fallen friend had to be thought of.

I found him sitting disconsolate on a sand-heap waiting for my return, with his right shoulder out. Very fortunately, I was quite *au fait* at this sort of thing, so, lying down on the ground and putting my foot against his body, I took hold of his hand

in both mine and pulled in the shoulder joint, then I tied the arm tight to his side, and we walked off to the tents, I leading the two horses.

That night we ate part of that boar for dinner; his head, of course, was "soused," and afterwards taken to camp and presented to the Mess.

By this time the wild pigs had been quite driven away into the deep jungle higher up the river, and not one was to be seen where dozens were grubbing on the day of our arrival. So we spent the remaining days of our leave of absence in "flight-shooting" wild duck which came to feed at the river in large quantities towards evening. Flight-shooting is a charming amusement for a quick shot, for the birds are going at a tremendous pace—far faster than one has any idea of. They come in twos and threes, generally passing over head every five or six minutes, and it is not at all uncommon to see the first one fired at, and the second one fall, for, as my readers will know, ducks and geese always fly in a line, one behind the other, when on passage. The best flight-shooting I ever had was near Flushing, in winter, on one or two occasions. I was there with punts and and punt guns, and any man who likes this sort of sport should go and enjoy it in Holland. He should also read *and study* that excellent book, *Colonel Hawker on Wild Fowl Shooting* (it is in the library at Riddell), for, though it is an old book, nothing has since been published to equal it.

The Boar.

"The Boar, the noble Boar's my theme,
Whate'er the wise may say;
My morning thought, my midnight dream,
My hope throughout the day.

"I envy not the rich their wealth,
Nor kings their crowned career;
The saddle is my throne of health,
My sceptre is the spear.

"Then pledge the Boar, the noble Boar,
Fill high your glass with me,
And here's to all who fear no fall
And the next grey Boar we see."

Chapter V.

1856.

ON THE PUBLIC WORKS.

WHEN Lord Frederick Fitzclarence came out to Bombay as Commander-in-Chief of the troops of that Presidency, he brought with him a very clever mathematician, said to be a near relative of his own, and established at Poona a (or the) Normal Military School, of which he made him Principal. He was a most excellent man, exceedingly clever, and a most marvellous teacher; that is, he was able to impart knowledge to his pupils in a way I have never seen before or since. As time went on I was able to class him among my most valued, I may say most beloved, friends, and this friendship continued long after both of us had left India, for when Lord Frederick's time of command was up he obtained for Mr Scrivener (for that was his name) the post of Paymaster to my old Regiment, the 83rd, with the relative rank of Major. After he left he took up his abode at Kingston-on-Thames, where I commanded the South London Brigade, and then went to Eastbourne (where I by chance followed him on retiring on half-pay), and there he died.

Having heard of the establishment of this Military School, and thinking I might do myself good by going there, or at least have a holiday for a time from the drudgery of regimental routine, I applied for and obtained permission to go, and, on that being settled, sent to Bombay for a number of books on the subjects required, and set to work of myself to study them while waiting at Deesa, where we were quartered. Then became apparent the immense advantage of having acquired a sufficient knowledge of many subjects to enable me to continue, with the aid of a book, any one or all of them without the assistance of a master, which, under the circumstances, was quite unprocurable.

I have said before that I was but a few months at the College at Poona before drawing the attention of the highest civil and military authorities to my performances, for there was nothing that was taught us at that place in which I did not excel.

Do not let anyone suppose that it was very easy to place

myself in such a position. Few could have worked so untiringly and continually as I did, and when I say that I laid down, from the very first day, the rule that I should work sixteen hours a day, reserving only eight hours for food and sleep combined, and that I kept this rule without even excepting a single Sunday to the very end, my readers will understand what I mean by hard work. I drank no wine or beer, ate very sparingly, was up every morning at 5 A.M., and was never in bed till 12, with three hours left for meals.

When all was done I found myself as thin as a lathe, and as wiry as whipcord, in the finest training, and in the most perfect health, though it was the hot weather in India, and most of us know or can guess what that means.

As I mentioned before, when I had been three months at the School, one fine day I was handed an official letter "On Her Majesty's Service," and this contained, after some commendations from the "Government of Bombay in Council," an offer of an appointment on the Public Works, with the very unusual proposal that I might choose any district I preferred in the Bombay Presidency. Of course I selected the Poona district, for, to a certain extent, I was able to carry on my studies, and had the advantage of the teaching of my friend Mr Scrivener. Very soon after that I was gazetted a fourth-class Assistant Engineer, Bombay Presidency, and appointed to the Poona district.

Having thankfully accepted this handsome offer, which was practically my start in life, I was ordered to read up, and pass before the Chief Engineer, examinations in road surveying and levelling, flow of water through pipes and over weirs, hydraulics, and hydraulic engineering; these were expected to fit me for constructing public roads with their bridges and culverts, and for the planning and constructing of water works of any magnitude, either for irrigation or the supply of towns and villages. In military engineering, fortifications, field works, &c., I was well up, having learnt that at Cheltenham College, where I was superintendent of the modelling-room (about 1845). I had full charge of the fortifications in sand, and practically made the models of all the large systems with my own hands.

From the foregoing it will be seen that an officer in the Army must search for his "opportunity," and when found he must not fail to seize it. "There is a tide in the affairs of men which, taken at the flood, leads on to fortune." In fact, though it is often not tasteful to him to do so, an officer should not fail to advertise himself quietly whenever he gets a chance, and whenever

he gets a testimonial he should carefully keep it. It is most advisable when he has a few of them to have them printed together, say at least a hundred copies of them.

As soon as these examinations had been passed by me I was dispatched into the district on some works. First I was sent 20 miles off to investigate, draw plans, and make estimates for the supply of a village with water, and, having carried this out to the satisfaction of my Chief, I was sent to survey and lay out a line of road towards Satara, to design culverts and bridges for the same, and estimate for the whole; which plans and estimates were sent in to Government together with specifications, all in due form.

This, after some months, I completed (some 20 miles in all), and came into Poona for the rainy season to make my plans and drawings, and to "take out" the quantities, while for a brief space the Public Works were suspended owing to a famine which had visited the land.

No sooner had my papers regarding this road been sent in and approved than I was dispatched to Ahmednuggar, near which I was desired to commence a famine road for the purpose only of "keeping the wolf from the doors" of the starving population.

On reporting myself to the Executive Engineer of that station, and handing in my orders at his office in the fort (where the Boer prisoners were confined during the recent war), I went off to a village some 10 miles on the road to Delhi.

A large grant of money was given me to expend on these poor people, my instructions being to make a road from Ahmednugger towards Delhi, thirty feet wide and banked up two feet high; the earth to be taken from side ditches; no metal was at that time to be put in, and no bridges were to be built, but ramps were to be cut into and out from any streams that might be crossed, as a temporary measure.

On a little knowe covered with trees I pitched my tent, with the servants' and cooking tents, &c., behind, and at once commenced my work.

After taking a ride along the line and a general view of the ground, I began by laying out with bamboo poles several miles of the road, and at the end nearest my tent I had a short model section, some twenty-five yards long, thrown up to enable the workmen, who had no experience of these things, the better to understand how to proceed; and in doing so with a few coolies, I took special care to notice how long they were over the work, that I might apportion to each starving person a

suitable task, remembering that the class of workers who would flock to my standard as soon as I announced being ready to receive them would consist chiefly of old people and young children, for it was likely that, under the circumstances of the famine, the strong ones of the family would have left for the double purpose of decreasing the pressure on provisions and of endeavouring to procure work for themselves elsewhere, leaving the weaker ones behind. As it was to enable the latter to procure food that I was sent, it was for me to give them but an easy task—for task of course they must have—so I awarded to each one running foot forward of the banked-up section a-day, and I chose this figure because it was easy for them to understand, for had I talked to them of cubic feet that would have puzzled them terribly, and this of course I strove not to do.

Now, here I must explain that when a work such as a road or a canal was to be constructed in the districts in India, it was customary to put some little pressure upon the coolies to bring them together and to keep them, and this was somewhat the way it was done:—The engineer officer having arrived at the ground with his camp, sent out "puttee-wallahs" (men with wide embroidered belts of office over the shoulder) to the different villages round about, and they went to the coolie quarters, either by themselves or with the headmen of the villages, and ORDERED, simply ORDERED the coolies to go and work on the road or canal; they herded them there, and, when there, handed them over to a "muccuddum" or overseer, who took up the herding. All names were entered in books by a clerk, and, to induce them to remain, they were kept much in arrears of their daily pay, which was only given them monthly; if they ran away in the meantime, they were deprived of the arrears, which was forfeited absolutely, and tradition also said that, even when they did receive their pay, a good deal of it stuck to the fingers of the muccuddums and the native clerks.

Now, this was a system that I did not approve, and in this case—a work to relieve the famine-stricken poor—it was to me quite intolerable to apply such a system, as well as most unnecessary. So when I was ready to receive my starving army, I issued in the vernacular (which was thoroughly understood by me) placards in large letters, which, through the headmen of the villages, I had posted up in the most conspicuous places in large numbers of towns for many miles round. These placards explained the reason for and object of my visit to

the district, pointing out especially what the pay would be and what the hours of work, and drew attention to the fact that money would be paid each evening, and no one would be asked to work an hour longer than he pleased at any time.

However, to my astonishment, the placards had not the effect I had hoped; no hungry men and women came; days passed, a week passed, two weeks had gone, and, except a few ill-looking men who intimated they were "muccuddums," and if I gave them puttee-wallahs to go with them they would fetch me men by force, nobody looked near; indeed, I was quite in despair and much disheartened.

One Sunday, however, when sitting reading under the shade of the porch of my tent, I noticed a man stealthily approaching, and, after watching him for a little while, I beckoned him to come to me. Then he came forward, and throwing himself at my feet most humbly begged forgiveness for intruding, and explained as follows:—"Sahib," he said, "we have all read your placards, and our souls are much moved, but we are afraid, and the lot has fallen upon me to come and see you personally. I am a post-runner and I have a little, but those around me are starving, and are both anxious and willing to come forward and work"; in a word, they thought such treatment "too good to be true," and feared there must be some trap in it. When I had shown him the model section, and explained the whole thing and so reassured him, he gained confidence and said:—

"Then to-morrow morning, Sahib, Monday morning, I will by the help of God and with your permission bring some coolies."

In the morning he brought ten men and women; I was on the ground at daylight, with the clerk and his muster roll, to meet them. Picks, shovels, and baskets were given out, and, the names being taken and my friend of the previous day being made muccuddum over them, the task, ten running feet, was marked off and work at once commenced. The people could take their own time, work when they liked, rest when they chose, but before any pay was issued the task must be done. They worked away off and on all through the sun, and by five in the evening I was called to see the work thus far complete. They sat in a row just as the people sat when they received the loaves and fishes, and each got four annas (6d.) for his or her day's work. It did my heart good to see the happy but serious faces as each tied up the little silver coins in the corner of his "coprar" (garment).

Well, the next day I had twenty or thirty more, and more still on the third day; the thing swelled like a great snowball, until my friend (who was for long afterwards my head man) had a hundred and fifty coolies under him, all working well, and all receiving their day's wages each evening religiously.

But soon the numbers grew to such an extent that new rules had to be issued, as it was impossible to pay them daily, and more head-men of gangs had to be selected. The altered rules were these :—

1. Gangs must not consist of more than a hundred men each, nor less than fifty.
2. Workers may choose their own head-men when they like, subject to my approval.
3. It has been found impossible to issue pay oftener than once a-week—that will be Saturdays. No work to be done on Sunday.
4. To enable those without money to get provisions, a limited number of "Shroffs" will receive passes to sell provisions at fair prices fixed by the Sahib. These rules will come into force this day week.

My readers will see they had a week to consider these things, and, when the day came, they all slipped into the new method without the slightest hitch. I had now several hundred coolies, but the time arrived when I had to limit the numbers for want of tools, though, but for that, I might have had ten times as many, for the fame of my system had already got abroad, and probably every coolie—man, woman, and child—for a hundred miles round would gladly have joined my standard, as was most distinctly shown six months after. Well, people may say I gave them too little to do, and therefore they flocked to my works. Let us see.

Now, when the people had been well fed for a month, health and strength were restored, and, from the way that some of the gangs completed their task, it was evident how light it was, for, though fitted for old men and young children suffering from famine, it was certainly too little for the same people when well-fed, healthy, and happy. So it became clear to me that the task should be raised. But how was that to be done? It is easy to let a task down, but not so easy to raise it without considerable discontent, and at the bare suggestion men had already begun to assert that I was oppressing the starving poor. However, I had a duty to perform to my masters, the Government, who granted the money, as well as to their hungry subjects, and I know not one instance

all through my long life when I have shrunk from my duty, however disagreeable it might be. It had to be done, and I would do it, but with as little friction as possible.

Just at this time my first grant came to an end, and a report was made of this fact to Bombay. It came before the Governor in Council, and so satisfied were they with what had been done that forthwith another grant equal in amount to the original was voted. That settled the matter. The order regarding the change must be written and issued immediately, and, when issued, must be carried out. I confess to having been a bit nervous as to results, but there was nothing else for it, so the order was written out, and from memory it ran thus:—

"I have received sanction for another large grant of money similar in amount to the first, but, before drawing it, I have this to tell you: Up to now your task of one running foot has been a light one, but, now that you have fed well and are strong, I am of opinion it should be increased. I have two sets of people to consider, and it is my bounden duty to consider both impartially. I have you to think of and to feed, but I have to take care of the interests of the Government that has fed you and will, if you choose, continue to do so. Few of you will dispute the fact that a fair day's work should be given for a good day's pay. Therefore, this day week you will be required to complete each day one and a-half running feet instead of one, that is—half as much again, for the same wage. Remembering, however, my promises given in the beginning, that all who accepted my invitation to labour here should be free to come and free to go at their own option, and also that for every foot you did you should certainly be paid, you will now understand that any man or woman who thinks this new order objectionable is quite at liberty to give up all work this day week, and also that all arrears of pay due to anyone, however humble, will certainly be paid up on their leaving, or on their applying for it at any future time whatever."

This was my proclamation, and the head-men of the gangs having been summoned to my tent and addressed by me, were handed each a clearly written copy of the ordinance in their own vernacular, to be read by some one who knew how, to the different gangs, fourteen to sixteen of which were on the road.

At daylight, when the Monday morning arrived, I was on my horse going down the line examining the banking, and, on my approach, each batch of coolies stopped work while they listened to my explanation and enquiry, "Does any one of you wish to leave?"

One after another this question was put to the gangs, but none

of their numbers fell out until, on reaching one lot about the middle of the work, four men stepped to the front, flung down their picks and shovels, denouncing at the same time my orders as "Zulum" (tyranny). Again I repeated the question, "Were they quite clear what they were doing?" So, on receiving another insulting reply, and seeing some people standing by, I offered the tools to them, which they readily took up, and forthwith set to work in the ditches.

Six days after that these four men threw themselves on the ground and kissed my shoes as they prayed for re-employment. "They were starving." It was too late.

The second grant having been sanctioned, it now became necessary to lay out another twelve or fifteen miles of the road, and, at about the twentieth mile from the beginning, we came to the Godavery River, and a place suitable (as far as possible) either for a stone or iron or "flying" bridge was selected, the river at this point being somewhat bigger than the Tweed at Berwick, viz.—about 800 feet wide. Not far from the spot was the usual ferry, and for the present that was made use of for our crossing. At once I began to work as before, using long bamboo poles. I crossed the great river and marked out some six miles, the three nearest the stream being quite remarkable for the intersection of very numerous and very small streams.

It was evident that this would give us some trouble; it would be quite impossible to treat it in the same way as the rest of the road, and to cause the mounded banking to follow intact all the undulations, or to cut ramps into all these minute streams. But, if sufficiently large drain-pipes could be procured in the neighbourhood (which was quite likely), then these streamlets could all be crossed though, as can be understood, the longitudinal section of the road would be like that of a railway, showing alternately banking and cutting, taking from the tops of the rises enough earth to fill the hollows, and disregarding all side ditches. To arrange for such a proceeding was a matter of time, and so, when the works reached the point I have described, it was necessary to take the workmen beyond this three-mile piece, and there commence the banking, and leave the undulating part until we would be prepared with the tile drain-pipes. This was done, and very shortly after our grant came to an end, so it was necessary to dismiss the work-people to their homes with the three miles of cutting and banking left undone. This, as you will readily understand, was much regretted by me, but there seemed nothing to be done but grin and bear it.

However, as I was riding along it occurred to me I had done a great deal for these people, and we had got on very well together, and, notwithstanding public opinion that "niggers" knew not what gratitude was, I would give them a chance of showing it if they felt inclined. So the day before they were to be dismissed I went over the Godavery to their little camps, and, having summoned the head men of the gangs, I addressed them thus :—

"I have come to take leave of you all; the money granted by the Government is all expended, to-morrow will finish it, but my heart is sore that, after you have done so well, the 3 miles of road in the middle should be left unfinished. I have been the humble instrument in the hands of God and the Government to carry out this work and to support you and your families with food during this terrible famine which has swept so many into their graves. It has been my pleasure during these trying months to do the best I could for you, and I am now going to my office tent to make up the accounts for the Sirdar. The amount of earth to be removed cannot, on this piece of road, be measured out in running feet as you are accustomed to have it, but only in cubic feet, which you will not understand; but I can tell you that if you all work at it, doing the same quantity as you have been doing, it can be completed in a little under a week, if you all remain behind and all work together. I give you my blessing, and I leave you now to recross this river. Here is an opportunity for you to show your gratitude for what God has done for you, but never shall I return across this Godavery unless you fetch me from my tent to show me the work completed. Remember I have no money to pay you, and the work must be done for nothing."

After saying this we parted; the head men, many with tears in their eyes, shook me by the hand, and they went back to their gangs while I returned to my tent.

Time went on, and for three or four days I sat working at the accounts, when one morning I heard the noise as of an approaching multitude. There were my people; they came in their hundreds to show me the road completed and for nothing.

No one can talk of the ingratitude of "niggers" after this, if you treat them kindly.

Chapter VI.

1858.

BUILDING.

There's a right way and a wrong way.

WE are putting in a new steam boiler at the saw-mills here at Riddell. The masons have put up its bed and flues of fire-brick, and are ready to put the boiler, which is lying some 40 yards off, into its place. It weighs 2 or 3 tons—how is it to be done? They all seem novices at it, so I have sent for an expert to help them. They have got some old tackle and some rollers, and are improvising an inclined plane of wooden and iron girders and planks up which they intend to haul, roll, or slide it. How they will get it in remains to be seen, but it puts me in mind of some work I once did for Government during the mutiny at Neemuch, in Central India, in 1858.

How we got the roofing stones on to the wing of the Neemuch Residency.

In this part of Rajpootana we use very generally for roof covering long flat stones, sometimes of an argillaceous nature, slate, in the south, and sometimes mica schist from the northern quarries. The building was a square room, about 15 feet wide and somewhat longer. We had quarried the stone beams, and had them all on the ground near by ready to be put up. But how was that to be done? The walls were about 14 feet high, so I proposed to make a long inclined plane built of wood, and haul, roll, or slide the stones up. They were each about 17 feet long by 15 inches or so square, and I and my men were planning and deliberating over how it was to be done, as we stood with a number of labourers about us.

After half-an-hour's talk, we thought we had arranged it all nicely, and were only hesitating as to the very considerable cost, when one of the labouring men, a native, stepped up to me and said:—

"Sahib, do you want those stones put on the top?"

"Yes," I replied.

"If your honour will give us the job, I and my pals will do

it by to-morrow morning if you do not think sixpence a-piece too much?"

Straightaway I marched him off to the office, and in less time than it takes to tell the story an agreement was signed. By mid-day the next day all the stones were up and in their places, and this was the way it was done:—.

The men took four long rafters, long enough to reach to the top of the wall, and placed them at distances of 4 or 5 feet apart, with their "heels" about the same distance from the foot of the building and resting on the ground. Then they tied cross ones on to them with the coir rope of the country at distances of about 18 inches, thus making a very wide ladder with broad bars. They rolled the huge stones up to the ladder foot where two strong ropes were passed under them, one end being fixed to the top of the ladder, and the slack ends held by two men at each on the wall top. Then two other men with crow-bars rolled the stones up as the men at the top took in the slack and firmly held it as the stones were moved up.

It was quite ridiculous to compare in one's mind the simple ease and rapidity with which these light, frail natives got up the great heavy stones when one thought of the ponderous machinery which we were about to erect to do the same work.

"There is a right way and a wrong way of doing everything" if we can only find out the right one. This was certainly a case of "skill against brute force."

Chapter VII.

1864.

MESMERISM AND CLAIRVOYANCE.

IT was during the time I was at the depôt at Chatham early in the sixties that a curious instance of the force of mesmerism came under my notice. Madame C——, a professional exponent of this science, came to Chatham, where, assisted by a clairvoyant, she gave a series of exhibitions of her skill. These seances took place in the Soldiers' Institution, and were attended by many of the officers and men of the regiments stationed in the Depôt Barracks at Chatham and Brompton in 1862.

One item on the programme, I remember, was clairvoyance. Madame C—— went round among the audience examining their watches and other articles, and questioning the clairvoyant concerning them. The young woman on the platform was at least 50 or 60 feet away when this was going on, and, though it was quite impossible for her to see any of the things, she described them all fairly accurately. On coming to me, I handed the mesmerist my bunch of keys on a ring inscribed with my name and address (Captain Sprot, 83rd Regiment, Riddell, Lilliesleaf, N.B.).

After carefully examining them for some little time Madame C—— put the following questions to the sleeping beauty:—

"How many keys are there on this ring?"

"Nine" was the reply. (Correct.)

"What are they made of?"

"Three are gold, the rest are steel." (Correct.)

"To what regiment does the owner belong?"

"To the 83rd." (Correct.)

"What is his name and address?" But here there was no response.

"Can you spell it?" Whereupon the girl carefully pronounced each letter of my name correctly.

"What country does he come from?"

"From Scotland."

This was in reference to the final N.B., and from these replies

it was perfectly evident to me that, though the lips of the clairvoyant were speaking, the mind and the eyes that guided them were the mind and the eyes of Madame C——. Being doubtful how to pronounce the proper name, she was unable to transmit the knowledge to her assistant, and consequently resorted to spelling; *vice versa* she transmitted the *meaning* of N.B. instead of the actual letters.

After this exhibition was over, several of the officers and men (among whom were Capt. W—— and Lieut. P——) submitted themselves as "mediums," on which this lady displayed her powers of mesmerising or "willing." P—— thoroughly enjoyed the fun of the thing, but it was rather a dangerous experiment for some of the others, especially W——, over whom she soon obtained an extraordinary influence. During her stay at Chatham she could compel him to do almost anything she "willed," even in his absence and at great distances. This was often much against his own inclination, and at last he grew quite annoyed and nervous about it.

About this time I had been ordered with my Company to Milton, near Gravesend—10 miles away—for musketry instruction at the Rifle Ranges there, and one afternoon, about two o'clock, just as I was starting off with a squad to the butts, Captain W—— arrived looking rather perturbed and ill-at-ease. He offered to accompany me to the Ranges, and remained with me all the afternoon. When we returned he suggested that I should ask him to dine with me at Mess. "Certainly," I replied, "We dine at 7-30," and invited him forthwith to come.

"The fact is," he explained in excuse for this unconventional request, "it is that woman, Madame C——. She is getting such a hold over me that I am quite afraid of her, and don't know what she will compel me to do next. She gives a performance this evening at the Rochester Theatre, and has told me that she will have me there, on the platform, on my knees before her. I don't want to make such a fool of myself before everybody, and I felt if I stayed where I was I should be forced to go, so I came here to get out of the way, and, of course, if I dine at your Mess I shan't be able to get there, for I *must* dine with you now you've asked me, and, moreover, she could hardly influence me so far away; besides there is no train after 7-30 till midnight."

"Quite right," I said, and took him off to my hut to wash his hands. While I was dressing, however, I noticed that he became somewhat restless, and soon he said:

"I think perhaps I'd better not stay after all; I ought to get back by the 7-30 train, I ought really, as there is not another till 11 o'clock."

"Oh, no," I replied firmly, "You've been asked to dine with me and you've accepted, and dine with me you must, so, of course, you will come." Upon this he subsided for a while, but gradually grew more and more fidgetty and kept looking at his watch, so I quitely locked the door and put the key in my pocket, dawdling as long as ever I could over my dressing.

At last, thinking he would certainly be too late, I opened the door to start off to the Mess room. As we stepped out on the square he exclaimed:

"I shall just have time to catch it. Good-bye, I really must go," and away he bounded off into the darkness. Afterwards I heard that he jumped into the train just as it was steaming out of Gravesend Station, that, when he arrived at the Rochester Theatre, the performance had already begun, but he pushed his way through the crowd, climbed over the seats in the pit, over the heads of the orchestra, and on to the platform, where he flung himself on his knees at the feet of Madame C——.

A year or two after this I left Chatham and returned to headquarters at Aldershot. Lieutenant P—— was there also, and there I met with another instance of that lady's power, though a less remarkable one. She was again on tour, and came to Aldershot and gave her entertainments in one of the Soldiers' Libraries and Reading Rooms, in the North Camp. One day, happening to meet Lieutenant P—— in the street, she remarked to him:—

"You are coming this evening, of course?"

"Oh yes, certainly," he answered, "I will be there." So during the evening she bade him come up on the platform, an order he obeyed as meekly as a lamb. He was a rough, horsey young fellow, very fond of hunting, and now, as the magnetic influence overcame him, the mesmerist made him imagine himself out for a day with the foxhounds. She gave him a chair which he at once turned over, and, having fastened some string round the top for the reins, he proceeded to get astride it, riding it round and round the stage, shouting and gesticulating as though he were taking fences and clearing ditches, much to the amusement of the soldiers present. When tired out he dismounted, and, pulling out his handkerchief, began to rub down his imaginary steed with the usual "Sh—shoo—shoo—whoa mare," and other appropriate noises; then led it back, as

he thought, to the stables, entirely unconscious of the derisive applause of the spectators.

When afterwards I had an opportunity of speaking to Madame C——, I mentioned Captain W——, and asked her how it was she contrived to bring him that evening all the way from Gravesend. But to my surprise she completely denied all agency in the matter. "Oh no," she declared, "it is quite beyond my power, I think, to influence anyone at so great a distance. He must have willed it himself." How that may have been I cannot say; I merely relate the facts as they occurred under my own observation, and as they were told me by reliable eye-witnesses, but I have no doubt whatever that whether she was conscious of it or not, it was her influence that caused him to act as he did.

Chapter VIII.

Sequel to Chapter V.

ANOTHER ROAD QUITE NEAR THE LAST ONE.

HAVING wound-up my accounts, &c., on the famine road, and dismissed all my men, it was necessary for me to proceed to headquarters and report myself to my chief, General Walter Scott, R.E., nephew of the great Sir Walter Scott of Abbotsford. This I did at the end of 1856. He received me with great kindness, thanked me for my exertions on the famine road, and then told me he had another road for me to make; but this time, he said, I would be unfettered with grants, and practically unrestricted as to time. The road was from the ghaut at Jeur—8 miles from Ahmednuggar—to Toka, on the Godavery, on the way to Aurungabad, in the territory of the Nizam. Three years was the time allowed to finish the work, which was to be complete with drains, culverts, big bridges, &c. and to be metalled with broken stone (macadam) or gravelled. Two of the bridges consisted of five arches, each of 60 feet span and 10 feet rise. He handed me the drawings and specification, reminding me that the official year ended on 1st April, and that therefore I need only estimate for sufficient money for three months' expenditure, asking me to say how much I would require to expend during this time. After devoting some hours to reading and taking notes of what was to be done, I folded up the papers, and, going to my chief's desk, placed them upon it, saying "Sir, I will take the whole of the money, if you please, for, though three years is allowed to do the work, I know what can be done in that district near where I have been working, and I intend to complete the whole thing in the three months, which I can easily do, for I can get together as many workmen as can possibly be required."

General Scott was evidently much surprised at my proposal, but remembering what I had already done at my examinations (for he had been the examiner), and what I had done on the famine road, he handed me back the papers, saying a few encouraging words, desiring me to report myself to the Executive Engineer of the Ahmednuggar District. On the following

day, to Nuggar I went, and, on reporting myself to the engineer, Captain Congreve, had again the question put to me as to the amount required for the current official year, to which, of course, I gave the same answer as before. This was his reply—"All nonsense, young fellow, you know nothing about these things, I will put you down for Rs——" (about one-eighth of the estimate allowed). Seeing that remonstrance would be useless, I accepted the position, and started straight away to carry out my mission, taking up my quarters to begin with, in a large tomb, at the top of the ghaut (or pass) overlooking the plain below through which the road was to be made.

A week or two then was spent in taking a general survey of the line, and in marking it out with bamboo poles, as I had done on the previous occasion, and also in collecting a staff of subordinates, ordering tools, carts, &c., sending my usual circulars to the villages, and summoning all those who cared to come to me for 100 miles round, and their name was legion.

THE ARRANGEMENTS I MADE.

As regards putting them into gangs of 100 (more or less) headed each by a muccuddum of their own selection, the payments, &c., &c., the arrangements made were precisely the same as formerly, and the road being marked out, all proceeded as to the banking, as had been done on the famine road.

But there was more to do than that—masons had to be called for, men to quarry the stones ("wuddars") had to be found, lime had to be made, bridges, culverts, and drains had to be built, carts in hundreds, with bullocks and drivers to be called in to carry the gravel to the roads, men had to be set to breaking stones, iron rollers to roll in the metal, &c., had to be bought in Bombay and got up to us, and bullocks and their drivers were sent for to drag the stones and the rollers; nor, indeed, was that all—the work (27 miles) was simply colossal, and when I had set to work to organise the whole affair, and one thing after another turned up, on more than one occasion my heart almost failed me, for I feared that, in my zeal and conceit, I had promised to do what no man could carry out; but, with the help of that Almighty God who gave me strength of body and mind, I completed in due time my self-imposed task. I was absolutely alone; no European, sergeant, corporal, or clerk, no native clerk or native of any kind, who had ever been on, or seen a road made, except those from my famine road, were there to assist or advise me, and I cannot describe to my readers

how proud I felt as my road progressed, when, from the top of the ghaut, I viewed the long white winding mark, going snake-like over the plain below, till fairly out of sight, and, as I sat there alone on my horse, can I be blamed for saying to myself out loud "And I have done all this." During all the time I was out I scarcely spoke a word of English; I only saw one Englishman who passed that way by chance, and gave me some Holloway's Ointment for my horse's sore back. But I was surrounded by probably over a thousand natives, "good men and true"—all were devoted to me, and my trouble with them was really very little; they were like children, very primitive in their ways, and I had to teach them almost everything.

THE WUDDARS.

Of course, everything did not always go quite smoothly, and a little trouble arose with these "stone quarriers," who, one fine day, went on strike. These men are a wandering people, whose profession is *alone* that of stone quarrymen, and they bring up their stones on sleighs to the works, drawn by the large, blue, smooth, long-horned, humpless buffalo, so well known in all parts of India. I cannot remember what caused these men to strike work, but one day they did strike, and refuse to bring another stone, and that just at the time we were busiest on the two large bridges. Obstinate, as usual, I would not give in to them—their demands were unjust—so they all walked away, goodness knows where, and I was left without stones and without a chance of getting any. What was to be done? What now of my boasted rapid completion of my line of road? I went to my tent, quietly thought over this unexpected difficulty, slept over it, as was my wont, and the following morning this was what I did.

I despatched a man into Nuggar to the Parsee merchants to get a quantity of rods of Swedish iron, and a certain kind of steel which gave a particular sort of fracture—hard steel for pointing the jumpers, and, when these arrived, set my iron workers, which were augmented for the purpose, to make a number of "jumpers." Another messenger I despatched to a village where I had ascertained a man lived who could make gunpowder. The man came, and the charcoal and other ingredients were procured, and a small tent pitched away from the rest where he set about making it. In the meantime, I hunted about for suitable quarries, as near as possible to the bridges. Then a dozen or so of the sharpest and most intelligent of the coolies were selected, and, when all was ready, I set to work

to teach them how to blast the rock, and lectured them on the well-known English system of quarrying. I sat down myself on the rock, and, taking one of the "jumpers," commenced with my own hands to bore the hole in the usual way—put in the gunpowder and fuse, tamped all down with small chips, and, after instructing the men about running away, and where to go, I set fire to the end of it, and walked away into security to watch the effect. The charge soon exploded, and was quite successful. Nothing then remained but for the men to go on according to my instructions, and, soon after buying 100 more carts (for they are small compared to ours), we got the bridges going again to the disgust of my friends, the wuddars.

They watched us for two or three weeks, and then they came and "knuckled under," imploring me to take them into employment again, which, after refusing more than once, I ultimately consented to do, on condition only, that the men I had instructed should be allowed, unmolested, to continue the work to the end, which they did.

LIME BURNING.

After this success, I instructed some of my men in lime burning. Children were sent with baskets to gather lime nodules from the surrounding fields and bring them to the bridges. Charcoal burners were invited to come to us from the Nizam's territory, we built up "butties" (lime kilns) and we burnt our own lime, and then we had complete command of the situation. The lime which is burnt from these nodules (and this is the only way lime is made in any district of India where I have been) is a very rich, pure lime, unfit, until "doctored," for building purposes, so we had a lime doctor who mixed up the mortar, using refuse sugar and a red looking stuff, the name of which I cannot remember, and when this mixture is properly made, the mortar is quite as good as Portland cement, making capital floors and highly polished walls and pillars, and is quite excellent for building arches. I will tell you an anecdote which occurred to one of the big bridges. There is very little wood to be got in most places in India, and that little is exceedingly expensive, so the way we proceed is to build up the "cent'ring" in or on the bed of the river with the stones we will afterwards use on the parapet and wings of the bridge itself, and to smooth over the semi-circular top with clay, which soon bakes hard in the hot sun. The haunches of the arches are built carefully, and when they approach near enough they are keyed. But it some-

times happens that a "spate" or thunder-flood, followed by a rush of water down the stream occurs, which, as it runs between the piers, washes away the gravel and lets the temporary "cent'ring" down in such a manner that the arch sinks, more or less, the result of this being that the half-finished haunches come down along with the "cent'ring." In the case I refer to, the unfinished arch did not fall with the "cent'ring," but the haunches stood straight out, held by the tenacity of this artificially concocted cement.

LIGHT VERSUS HEAVY ROLLERS.

Our road-making progressed most satisfactorily, all worked with a will and everything went smoothly; at one time our iron rollers were found insufficient, but we soon corrected that, much to our advantage, by cutting stone rollers out of one of the hill-side quarries. These small stone rollers were dragged by one pair of bullocks only, but the heavy iron ones, weighing four or five times as much, required a great many more. It happened that they worked in sections, all the iron were together and all the stone ones together, and surprisingly good work the little stone ones made, so much so that it was discovered before we had finished that the portions rolled by them were much firmer and better than those places which had been rolled by the heavy ones. This is worth remembering, for I know, beyond all question, that light rollers roll in macadam better than heavy ones, though it is contrary to the usual belief.

"GREAT BUSTARD."

Where the road was being made through the plains there were a considerable number of the large bustards. I remember the first two I shot there, they were carefully weighed and they turned the scales at 30 lbs. each. They have a very strong gamey taste when roasted, but the flesh, which is coarse, eats much like beefsteak. The flesh is dark but not tough. I had a very good cook in those days, a Bengalee native—no one ever cooked a partridge better than he did. Shortly after this (in February 1857) he came to me one day to tell me he must leave my service; on being asked the reason, he said, "That, Sahib, is my secret, but I will warn you; before long there will be many a widow made; you must trust no man; I am sorry to leave you, but my 'caste' have called me away." It turned out afterwards that he alluded to the coming mutiny—it broke out on the 27th May.

I shot a great many of these bustard, and curiously all, or mostly all, with No. 4 shot. They are splendid birds to look at; when you see them in the distance they resemble a man walking slowly along with long strides and his head erect. The birds have long necks with quantities of light white feathers, which are readily seen on them, and they carry their sharp beaks pointing upwards. It was my custom to approach them behind my horse or behind one of my bullock carts, which I took for the purpose temporarily from the road, and, when I got sufficiently near (30 or 40 yards), I fired at their head and neck, which is the only vulnerable part, with small shot, and had no difficulty in killing them quite dead.

I remember once, while riding my camel with a brother officer up behind, off to the mountains south-east of Mount Aboo from Deesa in search of a panther we had had "Kubber" (information) of, we saw at some distance what my companion fancied were two men working in the fields, but which I at once perceived were two "great" bustards. As soon as we had made sure of this, we "put down" the camel, took off the guns, and went after them in the rough, high-growing jungle-covered plain. I put into my "Sam Smith" flat-capped 12-bore gun an A.A. cartridge in one barrel, and an S.G. into the other, the first contains 32 pellets, the second only 12, the weight of shot being the same in both cases; we could not get near enough to shoot the birds with small shot. When about 60 yards off, they rose; my friend, unaccustomed to this sort of sport, fired both his barrels at his bird, with no results at all, and I fired steadily my A.A. (32 shot) at mine; both birds sailed away as if neither were touched, but my second barrel with the S.G. (12 shot), which I then fired, brought tumbling down the great 30-lb. bird. We carried it home, gave it to the mess-man, and, when it was cooked, I myself carved it. The result of my two shots was remarkable. Nearly the whole of the 32 pellets had gone into one side of the breast, and all lay snugly against the breast-bone, none having penetrated further; but of the S.G., 4 had entered the bird, 2 went right through the body, 1 smashed a wing-bone, and the other a leg-bone, then, but not till then, the bird fell.

This goes strongly to prove the wisdom of my theory, that it is advisable to shoot with bigger shot than is usual. Most gentlemen shoot, as a rule (except at snipe), with No. 5, or, more commonly, No. 6 shot, their reason being that there are more pellets in 5 or 6 than in 3 or 4, and that therefore their chance of *hitting* their bird is increased; but many go away wounded.

My theory is to shoot with Nos. 3 or 4, because a high wind does not so easily blow the shot out of the proper direction, and because when one pellet strikes the bird it is more effective —it goes into or through the bird, or will penetrate strong winter feathers and break a bone, where the lighter shot will glance off the strong feathers or be blown aside with the wind, or lodge in the skin or flesh only. It is better to let a bird or two escape scot-free altogether and kill dead whatever one hits, than to send them away wounded all over the place, as one not infrequently sees. With this belief, I have, in England, *always* had my cartridges loaded with No. 4, and frequently request my friends when they come and shoot with me to do the same. I only use 1 ounce of shot, but 4 drachms of black powder—Curtis & Harvey No. 6, 14 size, extra coarse grains.

Thus it will be seen that I differ from my neighbours by using larger shot, less of it, and putting more powder behind it than they do, yet I seldom wound the animals or birds and kill oftener, and make much longer shots, as a rule, than those who shoot with me using Nos. 5 or 6 shot.

THE MONEY RUNS SHORT.

On the days I went shooting it was my habit to return as soon as possible to the works, for I had to go over them every day. At daylight I started in one direction and rode, more or less, about 10 miles and back, and, in the afternoon, I rode the same distance and back in the other direction, thus covering on an average 40 miles a-day, to do which I kept four horses. Of each day's ride I had to keep a record, and each month total it up and send in my mileage with my report. Forty miles a-day was about my average—that is 900 odd miles per month—during the years I was employed as an Executive Engineer, but on one or two occasions I have overtopped the 1000.

When journeying through my large district of Rajpootana of 119,000 square miles, my rule was, according as the villages came that lay in my road, to go 30 to 35 miles each day, and on these occasions my tents, my camels, my horses, my servants, and my four milk goats always accompanied me. I do not count Sunday in the mileage, because I never worked myself, nor travelled, nor allowed nor caused any of the natives under me to work on the Sabbath, unless for unavoidable reasons, during the War, nor did I ever fire a shot on Sundays, even though my brother officers did, though I must admit that sometimes I have sat on the bank of the river, if there was one near my camp, and fished for an

hour or two. Well, after killing my two bustard and despatching them home to my tent, I set off to complete my daily routine, and ultimately reached home myself in the evening. On arrival, at once I noticed consternation on the faces of my native clerks (there were no Europeans with me). The money for the weekly payment had not arrived. The Executive Engineer "was sorry," but all the money for the current year which he had asked for for this work had been expended, and he had no authority to issue any more. Here was a terrible dilemma. The men would all have to go, and without pay, till this was settled; if they went, they would never be got back again; the work would be stopped, and my boast would not be carried out. Great was my tribulation. What was to be done? Acting on the principles I laid down for myself in very early life, and have continued to this day, I said little, went off to my dinner, determined to sleep over my difficulties—more than once I have been helped out of them by a dream. I will wait for the morning—"God is good; God is great." "Inshale," He will show me a way out of my trouble. Next morning (it was Saturday) the head men of gangs were summoned; all this was explained to them by me, and by them to their people. They must wait, I would see the matter righted somehow; they must trust in me now, as they had on so many former occasions. Then I sat down and wrote two letters, one to the Chief Engineer in Bombay, the other to the "Collector" of the Zillah (Division), both of similar purport. If the men and women, and artisans and bullock-drivers, the trained quarrymen, the lime-burners, the blacksmiths, the gunpowder maker, the clerks, and who not besides, separated, how could I ever hope to re-assemble them when it pleased the Executive Engineer to see fit to send me money to go on with? I had no money of my own, only my pay to live on, not even had I an allowance to help me from my father during all the time I was in India as most other officers had. Would they please tell me what I was to do? These letters I dispatched, each by an active post-runner, to their destination, with orders to wait for an answer. The first to arrive was from the "Collector" (Mr Fraser Tytler):—"On no account stop the works, draw on the 'Mamludars' of the Zillah for any sum short of the estimate; they have directions to advance you the money." Twenty-four hours later came a reply from General Walter Scott, the Chief Engineer:—"My dear Sprot, on no account stop the works, draw on my private account at the Agra Bank for whatever you require; I have given them directions to honour your cheques to any amount." "Shahbash" (well done). I elected

to draw on the nearest "Mamludar," and, riding over to his village with one of the clerks, came back with the money, and all were paid that evening. Then I made my report to the Executive Engineer of what I had done, and never again had any difficulty on the score of money.

THE MUTINY BREAKS OUT.

By the middle of April the road, including a "flying" bridge which I built over the Godavery River at Toka of 1005 feet span, was, except the two big bridges, practically completed. Metal and gravel had been put down and rolled in, and the finishing touches alone remained to be put on. The opening of it was looked upon in the near future. Most of the labourers—men and women—had gone off to their homes with their pockets full of money, and I was looking forward to going back to Poona very soon to ask for more work, when, suddenly to my surprise, I found my road was to be opened sooner than I was prepared for, and in a manner I never dreamt of. On that never-to-be-forgotten day, the 27th of May 1857, the Indian Mutiny broke out at Meerut, and, marching on Delhi, the revolted native regiments put the old King of Delhi upon the Throne, and all Bengal was in a flame. Those who were left of my men, headed by their muccuddums, volunteered to form a guard round my tent at night, which I did not refuse, though I then remembered the words of my Bengalee cook—"Trust no man." Every night I slept with my double-barrelled pistol in my hand and my "shickery" knife under my pillow, never knowing when I lay down in the evening if it would please God that I should live to the next day, and such indeed were my feelings during the greater part of the two years of the Mutiny, for I was generally alone in the district without an escort or European near me. I slept soundly, but so sensitive did my feelings become that the slightest sound woke me, and this continued after I had returned to England almost up to the present time.

THE OPENING CEREMONY.

Of course, troops began to move about in every direction as soon as the revolt was made known throughout India, because Sepoys were rising against their European officers, no one knew when or where, but among the places affected was Aurungabad, where two regiments of "The Nizam's" Irregular Horse were stationed, they (as was done all round) rebelled against their British officers, forcing them to take refuge in the Mess House,

which they fortified, and, with a few who were faithful to them, defended themselves as best they could until succour might reach them. To relieve these gentlemen, a small force of mixed arms was got together at Poona under General Woodburn, composed of half a Field Battery of Artillery, the 10th Hussars, and a Bombay Native Infantry Regiment, with Commissariat and Hospital arrangements, and these were ordered to march, with all haste, to relieve the besieged officers. This force reached the end of my new road on 8th June 1857, and I was there to conduct them over it to Toka, and transport them and their impedimenta across the Godavery with the aid of my flying bridge and the ford lower down. This was done quite satisfactorily, but not without some difficulty, particularly at the ford, a dangerous one, over which I personally led the 10th Hussars, troop by troop.

After getting the little army over the great river I rode into Aurungabad with them. Marching all night we reached the cantonment at daybreak, and advanced, after deploying, straight on the lines in which the mutinous corps was quartered. They were called upon to surrender, but that they refused to do, taking shelter in their huts and "sniping" at us from behind them. The Field Artillery with which I was, was ordered up, formed and unlimbered, and commenced firing "canister." A few of the mutineers were killed, "the rest, they ran away," but many of the poor horses which were tethered in front of the huts were killed or badly wounded.

A little incident worth noticing occurred while I was standing by. A rebel native officer, said to have been the instigator of the rising, rode up to the Commanding Officer, Colonel Abbot, with his sword drawn. The Colonel pulled out his revolver and was about to fire at his assailant, which, on the Jamedar seeing, he took his sword between his teeth, and, pulling up and dropping his reins, put his two hands together in the attitude of prayer, saying, "Maff Kurro, Sahib"—(forgive me, sir). On this the Colonel lowered his pistol, but no sooner had he done so, than, recovering his reins and his sword, the fanatic vigorously attacked him. In a moment, however, he was disarmed and made prisoner by one of our men standing by, taken to the historic Mess Room, where, in half-an-hour, he was tried by Court-Martial and sentenced to death, after which I, the Ex-engineer Officer, was ordered to construct a gallows, out of anything I could find, on which to hang the villain. This I did with some difficulty; making one out of two palm trees and a couple of cross-pieces,

the lower one forming "the drop," which was held in position by a wedge until the supreme moment arrived, when the wedge was knocked away and the mutineer launched into eternity. A parade of all arms had been formed at three o'clock, when the Court-Martial was read and the villain hanged in front of the assembled troops. After this, I had to get me back alone to Toka, which I did at considerable risk, but without further adventure than a shot being fired at me from one of the villages I passed.

PUBLIC WORKS SUSPENDED.

On reaching my tents I found letters informing me that the Public Works were stopped, and that all officers must, as speedily as possible, rejoin their regiments. This being so, I had, on the first succeeding Saturday, to pay off my people, close the accounts, and proceed to camp at Ahmednugger. There I handed over all the remaining tools, carts, rollers, spades, picks, and crowbars, &c., &c., &c., and also the Accounts, to the Executive Engineer in the Fort—(this was the Fort in which the Boers were kept prisoners during the South African War)—and, having done so, proceeded to Poona. My regiment was at Deesa and Nusserabad, a wing at each place, but the monsoon having broken, it was necessary for me to remain where I was for two months until it had subsided, and, in the meantime, I availed myself of the opportunity of passing a very important examination, which I managed to get through so successfully that I came out first, and afterwards received the following commendation from the Bombay Government in Council:—

"Government Resolution, dated Bombay Castle, 5th September 1857.

"Lieutenant Sprot, who has shown himself a very useful officer in the Public Works' Department, has satisfactorily passed his examination; and though present circumstances (the Mutiny) prevent his employment at present, Government will be glad to avail themselves of any opportunity of employing him hereafter."

N.B.—The examination lasted for twenty-one days. My score was 300 marks above the next highest candidate.

2nd Section.

THE MUTINY.

This Section comprises "The Indian Mutiny," which extended over three years, and ended my service in the East.

Chapter IX.

1857 and 1858.

MY JOURNEY TO JOIN.

By the time I had gone through my examinations, and the Bombay Government had passed their resolution upon my services, the monsoon had nearly subsided, and I was handed back from the Civil to the Military Authorities, and ordered to join my regiment at Deesa. On receiving my route, I set off to Bombay, and there, having provided myself with a small, light five-chambered revolver, a small "alarm" watch (or clock) to attach to my pistol belt to awake me in the mornings, a pair of strong shoes, half-a-dozen thick worsted socks, and a blue and black chequered blanket, now in the Entrance Hall at Riddell, I took ship to Surrat and marched with my impediment (which was very light), and my servants, through Baroda to Ahmedabad. When I went to report myself on reaching this place, I learned that there was quartered there a Company of the 83rd Regiment, whose Captain had died of cholera the evening before I arrived, and that the authorities had resolved to send this Company back to Headquarters with me, as by this time the surrounding district had quieted down and their services were no longer thought necessary. So I straightway took command, and, early the following morning, marched away towards Deesa, which was reached without further adventure than the loss of a rifle stolen out of one of our tents.

ARRIVED AT DEESA.

On reaching Headquarters at Deesa, I reported our arrival, handed over the Company I had brought up, and, having been put in charge of my old Company, No. 3, I was ordered to take

it at once to Mount Aboo, and there quell an emeute which was giving some trouble, and with which the Company already there was not considered sufficiently strong to cope. Unfortunately for me, when I got out of bed the next morning, preparatory to starting away, my legs would not carry me, and, on the Doctor coming to see what was wrong, I was found to be in a high fever, but, not being disposed to give in, the Doctor (Touch), a dear old friend, whose birthplace was Inverary, at my particular request, popped me quietly into a palanquin, or dhooly, and had me carefully carried along with the men. It was a four days' march, and, by the time I reached the top of the hill, on which that very delightful sanatorium stands, I was able to make a show of marching in at the head of my men, and found, perhaps fortunately for me, the trouble which had brought me there was practically at an end. Having received, on arrival, a letter of instruction to hand over the Company, and not to supercede the officers who had been previously in charge, I did so, and spent a month here on leave, so to speak, devoting my time to shickar, killing several saumber (large horned deer), and cheetle (small spotted deer), some panthers, hyenas, and a lot of beasts and birds of sorts.

FROM MOUNT ABOO TO NUSSERABAD.

At the end of the month a Field Force, having been formed at Deesa, under Brigadier-General Botet Trydell, who was Colonel of the 83rd Regiment, started for Nusserabad, but, on the way, halted at the foot of the hills of the Alvery Range, of which Mount Aboo is one, and, having received orders to join it, I, with my Company, reported myself to my old Colonel (Trydell), who shortly afterwards asked me to take the duties of Brigade-Major to the Force, which I was proud to do. We marched away as was usual by night, or rather starting very early in the morning, and arriving at our camping ground each day just after sunrise, we pitched our tents, and so sheltered ourselves during the heat of the day.

OUR FIRST ADVENTURE.

We were marching away one night with the usual precaution—an advance guard in front, the head of which I generally accompanied—when, a little way off, my eye caught sight of a long row of little sparks of light. At once I realised that it was a line of matchlock men, and quietly halting the leading file, walked my horse back, halting each of the sections as they came

up to me in succession, enjoining strict silence, until I reached the head of the column, and there found my Commanding Officer, to whom I reported what I had seen. He was very excited, ordered the bugler to blow the "halt," and came forward with me to a place where he could see the line of little lights when pointed out to him. After looking at them for a few seconds, he said hurriedly to me, "Go, Sprot, go and ask them who they are and what they want." I did so, but, under similar circumstances, I think on another occasion I should have hesitated. As it was, they were "Sowdargeer" (merchants) they said, and, in a few minutes, we both passed on our way.

THE SECOND ADVENTURE.

A few days after this we caught a spy (or thought so), and it was, of course, necessary he should be tried for his life, so I ordered a District Court-Martial, which assembled in the mess tent after the troops had breakfasted, and an interpreter was sent from one of the native Infantry Regiments. While the trial was going on, I happened to be sitting in the mess tent attending to some official correspondence, and, as I sat near the end of the table where the prisoner stood, I heard every word that was said. Here, in parenthesis, I should say that at this time I was able to speak and think in Hindustani as easily as in my own language, for I had, on some occasions, been on public works in the district where, for eight or nine months at a time, I never heard, or spoke, or thought a word of English. Under these circumstances, my readers will not find it difficult to understand that I was most thoroughly able to follow what was being said on both sides. At first I was a little surprised at the translating of the prisoner's pleading, which did not seem at all correct; then I paid more attention, and, though it was not my business to interfere, I decided, under the circumstances, it was right of me to do so, for I felt sure that if I did not, the conclusion would be the hanging of a perfectly innocent man. The matter was a delicate one, but I rose quietly from my seat, and, in a low tone of voice, explained all to the President, and then, having obtained the interpreter's permission, I proceeded to ask the accused man several questions, to which the interpreter paid special attention. In a few minutes I was able clearly to show the young interpreter the errors he had made, and, before long, so convinced him himself and the rest of the Court—many of whom understood Hindustani fairly well—that the "spy" was very shortly acquitted honourably and released. It was curious to notice the difference

of the prisoner's manner when I commenced to speak to him. His eyes lit up; he spoke fluently, emphatically, and energetically; all he said was clear and lucid. It struck me very much; I have never forgotten it, and often have I thought, when reading the accounts of trials through an interpreter, "I wonder if the accused were guilty after all."

The man's gratitude was inexpressible when released, and he had realised that he was free; he sought me out, he threw himself upon the ground and placed my foot upon his neck, he would, while he lived, be my slave, he would serve me without wages to the end of his days if I would but allow him, his life was mine and at my disposal he said, and he followed the Force for some days in the vain hope that this might be allowed. He is not the only man who has done this; one man and his brother did actually serve me for nothing for some years. Where are they now? I believe they were both murdered at different times, either from jealousy or from caste reasons. Some day I will write the story.

Most of my readers will not be surprised if I tell them that this little incident was a good deal talked about through the Force, particularly when it had been ascertained that the man's antecedents were perfectly respectable; and it was suggested to me by some of my brother officers that it would be a good opportunity for me to apply for the interpretership of my own 83rd Regiment, which was just now vacant, especially when it was considered that the appointment, which was worth £100 a-year, would, if filled at all, be filled from some other corps, probably some Bombay Native Infantry Regiment. My present Commanding Officer and old Colonel was excessively favourable to this proposal, and was pleased to say that he would favour my views as soon as he took over the command of the 83rd, which he would do on our arriving at Nusserabad, and the Field Force, which consisted of reinforcements for the Nusserabad Army, had been dispersed. When, however, Nusserabad was reached, and he attempted to carry out his promises, he was checked by the Adjutant, who urged that, though I might speak the native languages better than others, still I could not produce the certificate of having passed the examinations, which was deemed necessary. It was in vain that I urged "this was a time for war, that no other interpreter could be found belonging to the Regiment, and that it was impossible the Authorities could refuse my request (well-known as I was to them) if backed by the Commanding Officer's recommendation." The Adjutant pressed upon the Colonel that it

could not be done, and the Colonel felt himself obliged to give way, so, knowing that a Field Force was under orders to march on the following day to raise the siege of Neemuch, then proceeding, some 200 or 300 miles south, and that two of our 83rd European Companies would form part of it, I begged that, under the circumstances, my Company should be nominated as one of them, and, this being granted, I marched with the newly-formed Field Force on the following morning.

THE MARCH TO NEEMUCH, 1858,

To raise the Siege.

The little Force consisted of half a battery of Artillery, half a regiment of native Cavalry (2nd Bombay Light Cavalry, Lancers), the whole of the 20th Bombay Native Infantry, and two companies of the 83rd Regiment under Captain Maloney. The whole was commanded by Major Prescott of the Cavalry.

We marched off at 2 in the morning, some 10 or 12 miles. It is right always to start early and make the first march a short one, because, if anything has been forgotten, or there is any question to ask from headquarters, it is not so far to send back and correct the error. Arrived at our destination, and our camp pitched, Lieut. Sprot was sent for by the Commanding Officer, and asked to take the post of "Staff Officer" to the Force. (This is the term used in the case of a small Force, where, in a larger one, the expression is "Brigade-Major.") Lieut. Sprot, of course, accepted the compliment, but retained command of his Company, and also the post of acting Adjutant to the European detachment, which Captain Maloney had, before leaving Nusserabad, asked him to take. These were the two first advancements I received on starting on the new track, the more pleasing that they were received in such early times.

SHOOTING EN ROUTE.

Nothing eventful took place during the march. But I cannot remember having marched through so beautiful a country in India, either before or after. Rich in cultivation, well wooded, and the surrounding hills and valleys most picturesque. I went out shooting a great deal, for when, after the night march was over, we had finished our breakfast, and all other officers had laid down to rest with their pipes, I, not being a smoker, preferred to start off with my gun and a boy, and always succeeded in bringing in enough game—duck, geese, deer, hares, partridges, &c., &c., to supply bountifully the Officers' Mess of the whole

Brigade. I have known myself to come in with no less than 20 "Grey Lag" geese, besides smaller birds, and often had to press men I found in the fields into my service to carry the load home to camp.

CHITORE GHUR.

There were many lovely spots all along our line of march. Beautiful fortresses on the summit of huge rocky excrescences which cropped up right in the middle of the vast plains. Round them was their "Petta" of thatched or red tiled houses peeping through the dark green foliage of the umbrageous "Banyan Trees" (*Ficus Indicus*), and the useful "Peepul Trees," on which the camels so greedily feed, but the most remarkable of all these was "Chitore Ghur." The rock was, in most places, about 200 to 300 feet high or more, perfectly inaccessible except by the steep steps cut in the stone at the one and only entrance gate. On the flat top inside the long walls, which surrounded the edge, was a rich cultivated soil of about 50 acres, and the Parsee merchant, who wished to impress upon me the great strength of the fortress, assured me it could never be taken, for the garrison could not be starved out, as, on the top of the rock and inside the walls, the people grew their own "corns." Within the fortification were a number of what were said to be white "marble" temples, but, on a close examination, and testing with sulphuric acid, I found the stone used was quartz, not marble. This was a curious revelation to me, because it is generally understood that quartz is too hard to carve, and there was some excellent carving there, for, by patience and perseverance at some time or another, the native occupants had, without question, succeeded in carving this quartz. We halted for a couple of days, and as for the shooting, both ducks and geese in the swamps below, I never saw the like before.

WE ARRIVE AT NEEMUCH.

In due time we arrived at Neemuch; the enemy had cleared off just before we marched in. The morning was bright and cool, and we had arranged to arrive after daylight. As was my custom in the position of a Staff Officer, I rode on some distance ahead of the troops (this is a system which, however, is not to be recommended in war time), and, passing through the small wood just beyond the parade ground, I beheld "a ghastly sight." There, hanging by the necks to the stronger branches of some trees, were the dead bodies of several natives, almost, if not quite, stripped of all clothing, with dozens of hooded crows sitting croak-

ing in the upper boughs, while nearly as many bare-necked vultures were standing waiting on the ground below. They were mutineers, or spies, or native police, who, when the siege began, bolted off to their homes. I shall probably have more to say about these later on. We marched on to the parade ground and halted. Then the European Companies took possession of the Fort, a nice little square bastion Fort, with a good ditch and glacis, and bomb proof barracks all round the inside of the square. It was a very pretty little Fort, and well constructed, one of the best in appearance I ever saw anywhere, and quite a match for the lovely Indian Fortresses we had passed during the march in so many places. The rest of our little Army pitched their tents on the parade ground, and the old garrison, consisting of some Bengali Officers, a few civilians, and some native police, glad to be freed, took their departure almost immediately. They had lost all they possessed but the clothes they stood in, and all (every one of) their bungalows and their contents had been burnt to the ground by the mutineers when they began the siege, or at least before they left.

AT NEEMUCH.

My first care was to mount the guards, post the sentries, and give them their orders—on the Fort—and, this done, which did not take very long, the camp had to be carefully marked out, as it was evident the Force now come to garrison the place would remain some time. This being arranged, the "outlying pickets," Cavalry and Infantry, had to be posted. All this was long and somewhat anxious work, which fell entirely on my shoulders, and the mid-day sun was pouring its burning rays upon my head long before any breakfast came to my share that day. But, when all this was over, and our safety was insured—but not till then—I had a good feed and two or three hours sound sleep, before the cool of the evening gave me an opportunity of reconnoitring the ruined cantonment. This I did in a general sort of a way, taking with me a walking-stick and a brother officer, not forgetting to see that my five-barrelled repeater, which I never moved off my belt night or day, was in quite good shooting order. First, the outside walls of the Fort were most carefully examined, then the lines of temporary entrenchments with which the Fort had been surrounded by the European occupants, and which the mutineers had taken and turned against them, were most carefully gone over, for these lines had been used for weeks against the Fort by the enemy. After that, we walked over to the Old Residency. It is a very

large, imposing stone building, through which there were several large shot holes from our cannon on the Fort. The roof was fire-proof; it had two wings, about one of which a story is told in Chapter VI. Then we rambled still further, and the scene of destruction which met our eyes was beyond description —not an atom of anything that could be destroyed, burned, or taken away, was left—not a house remained with a roof on it. The mutineers had held undisturbed possession for at least a month, and, during that time, they had not been idle.

Some months after this the Government ordered investigation to be made into the construction of the lines of entrenchment which surrounded the Fort, as to whether it was judicious to have made them at all, or whether those who ordered them were not greatly in fault, as they had at once been seized and turned against the Fort, which had proved most baneful. By that time I had been appointed Assistant Executive Engineer of the Rajpootana Field Force, with charge of the fortifications at Neemuch and in the vicinity. It suited my taste admirably, for, while at school at Cheltenham College, I had devoted great attention to this particular subject, and had had charge of, and did most of the work in, the modelling room (in sand) of field works, as well as permanent fortifications, "Vauban's First System," and the "Modern System," "Square Redoubts," &c., &c., and, when the voluminous papers concerning the dispute were submitted to me to report upon, no doubt I felt very proud, and could not resist the temptation of giving my opinion in these few words:—"I have examined these papers very carefully. Sir John Jones (of Peninsula War fame) says in his *Journal of Sieges*, page — 'The construction of long or continuous lines is a weak and injudicious proceeding, because, when taken in one part, they are taken in the whole.' I have the honour to be, &c., &c."

After reconnoitring all round, and having made some alterations in the posting of the outlying pickets, we got back to our tents in time for dinner, and, after that, I turned into my camp bed in the bomb proofs, not before I was ready to sleep.

OUR DUTIES THERE.

We found Neemuch a very pleasant climate; we had the ruined cantonment all to ourselves; we were a long way from the native village, which was all the better for us. Our duty was, perhaps, heavier than usual, and my own, doubtless, the heaviest of all, as I had to do my Regimental, Company, and Adjutant's duty, as well as my garrison duty, and my brigade

work three times a-week. Once by night, after 1 A.M., and once by day, I had to visit the outlying pickets; and four times a-week, regularly, Regimental duty, bread and meat, breakfasts, dinners, &c.; and to visit the sentries on the Fort twice by day and twice by night. Then there was daily the Brigade Orderly Room. Besides this, a very unpleasant duty devolved alternately on a brother officer and myself. It was to command the firing parties who were ordered to shoot such rebellious native sepoys and police as were sentenced by a Court-Martial of native officers to "suffer death by being shot." Poor fellows! I marvelled at the time that this could be allowed, and I have marvelled much about it ever since. Five or six parties did we take down to the outskirts of the camp, each with six or eight policemen deserters, and there shot them like brute beasts, and buried them all together in one large hole.

On one occasion, in my party were two poor little crying, snivelling boys of twelve and fourteen. "These boys to be shot?" I asked. "Yes, sir." "I must invoke the authority." So I sent to the Commanding Officer's tent, while waiting with my party outside, and the reply came, "The sentence of the Court-Martial must be carried out." How many of these men deserved this fate? Forgive us, Great God. These are a part of the horrors of war. When men's blood is up, what evil will they not do. In this terrible rebellion, did not I and many others who were detached from their Regiments literally for months and months "walk in the valley of the shadow of death?" For it should be understood that a very large proportion of us who were in India at the outbreak were, from some cause or another, separated from the protection afforded to the officers who were with the European corps, or even the sanctity of a cantonment or large camp. We were practically in the jungle, or in deserted native Infantry camps, far away from all protection; and this had been the position of the Europeans confined in the Fort of Neemuch. Each night when we lay down to sleep with our pistols in our hands, who could tell that the knife of the assassin would not end our existence before the sun rose again?

A MAN BLOWN FROM A GUN.

I once (at Neemuch) saw a man blown away from a gun. The whole garrison was ordered to parade; it was formed up on the ground in a three-sided square—in one corner a six-pounder field gun was drawn up pointing towards the open space. In the

middle of the square was the Officer Commanding the troops and his Staff. When all was ready, a file of the guard, with fixed bayonets, under a Corporal, marched in the prisoner, whom they brought from the Guard-Room, the Court-Martial was read, and the sentence was read—"Death, by being blown away from the muzzle of a gun." Then the prisoner was marched across to where the gun stood, and halted a few yards in front of it. The gun was loaded with a half charge of powder, and two of the gunners advanced with a rope to bind the prisoner and tie him to the muzzle with his back to the gun, as was the custom. Till then, the prisoner, a handsome young fellow of five-and-thirty or so, showing in appearance and in every movement his high birth, stood motionless, but, when he saw the men advancing to bind him, he at once evinced his objection to such a proceeding. His manly and aristocratic appearance seemed to overawe the gunners, who stood still, puzzled, not quite knowing what they should do, so seeing this, I stepped forward towards the prisoner. Appealing to me he said, "Sahib, these men are advancing to bind me; I am a Prince, the son of a Rajah, and I am a Rajpoot; my family stand high in esteem, and are distinguished in this land for their bravery. Sahib, I am not afraid to die, I would be ashamed to require binding, I am in your hands, beg for me that I may not be subjected to this degradation." Then I spoke to the Commander of the gun and told him and those near me what he had said, begging that in his last few moments he might have his own way, at the same time offering to vouch for him. Turning to the prisoner I said, "I have vouched for you, Prince, you will not betray me; you can do as you ask, may God receive your soul." He thanked me graciously and with much feeling, and then walking straight up to the gun, placed his chest firmly against the muzzle, at the same time folding his arms over the swell. He looked straight at the man with the match, and, in broken English, said to him firmly, "Fire." There was a pause, all concerned with the gun seemed for a moment paralysed, not a man moved a muscle—I believe they would have cheerfully thrown the match, the ropes, and the handcuffs on the ground and cheered him—and it was not until No. 1, whose eyes were fixed on me, had got my nod that he applied the match. Then the usual report, a cloud of smoke, the elastic fluid entered the cavity of the chest, bursting it outwards in every direction; the head went high into the air, while the arms and legs were sent right and left, and the trunk was blown to fragments, a disgusting and appalling sight. I shall never forget it. These are the things men hate in war, and never care to speak of again.

Chapter X.

1858.

FURTHER PREFERMENT.

AFTER we had just got settled in at Neemuch, I received a private note from Sir George Lawrence, K.C.S.I. (brother of Sir Henry of great fame), who was Governor of Rajpootana, or, as the official title was, "Governor General's Agent for Rajpootana," and his letter, which was quite a short one, as far as my memory serves me, ran as follows:—"DEAR SPROT,—I have been in correspondence with the Colonel Commanding your Regiment at Nusserabad (Col. Steel), asking to have your services placed at my disposal, but without success; and I have written to the same purport to the Military Authorities in Bombay, but they were unwilling to oppose the wishes of the C.O., when his Regiment is on field service, and so under-officered as they say it is. But I have at last succeeded in making a compromise; they will allow you to come to me if you think you can manage to carry out your military duties, as well as the civil work I am anxious to put you at. I am desirous of appointing you Assistant Executive Engineer of the Rajpootana Field Force, to reside at Neemuch, take charge of the fortifications, move with troops when required, and rebuild the barracks for Europeans on plans which will be sent you. You will have a salary of Rs. 400 a-month, in addition to military pay and travelling allowance. If you think you would like to accept the appointment, your name will be put in the next Gazette." I need not say I accepted the offer. I wrote—"The day has twenty-four hours in it; I will do as much as I can for both sides in those hours."

In a few days fuller details came. My chief was Colonel Mumby, Bengal Engineers. I had a Public Works Sergeant sent me, of the name of Brabazon, a useless old fellow with whom I soon had to part, and then I got a Corporal Coil of the 83rd Regiment, who was in my own company. He enlisted in the Royal Engineers at Chatham, when his first term of service expired, and got on very well. As on my appointment to the Famine Road at Ahmednugger, I had to form and teach from the beginning my whole staff, so on this occasion, and I did it quite successfully. General Roberts, commanding in Rajpootana, wrote in

May 1858:—"To Lieut. Sprot, 83rd Regt., Assistant Executive Engineer, R.F.F., who had the entire charge of constructing barracks at Neemuch, great praise is due. Thrown entirely on his own resources, and from want of a subordinate establishment, obliged to superintend every detail in person, this officer had completed 4 barracks, commenced on the 15th February, by the middle of April, and two more are well advanced. As far as I can judge, no better accommodation for European troops could be desired."

My work was now really hard. I had rather gloried in the fact that, when studying at the Normal School at Poona, I worked sixteen hours a-day, and had eight left for sleep and food. At Neemuch, I worked even harder, but the encouragement and kindness I received I shall never forget. All my brother officers, of whatever service, did what they could to help me; some of them had a few bottles of beer, and each night at dinner for weeks and weeks they arranged that one or other should send me unfailingly a bottle for myself. The other officers had nothing but Arack, a strong native spirit made from rice, which I could not manage to drink. They could not relieve me of my military duties; these I did myself, three nights a-week Garrison, and four nights a-week Regimental, but on Court-Martial Boards and Committees they always volunteered to sit for me.

THE CONSTRUCTION OF BARRACKS.

Before long, the plans and specification for the new Infantry barracks (European) came. They were to be built of sun dried brick, and tiled—six of them—and an additional barrack for the Artillery of stone and lime, with flat stone roof. They were well designed, fine large buildings, and, as soon as I could get men together, the work was commenced.

It must be remembered that Neemuch was a British Cantonment in the middle of a "protected" State, with the government of which we had little or nothing to do, so, when artisans or men of that sort were required, it was necessary for me to apply to the "Vakiel" or native resident, in this case of the province of Oodipur, and I did so. He came up from the native town where he lived, and, after I had explained everything to him, he cordially offered to do what he could to assist me, and, what was more, he really did do so. He was a very nice gentlemanly fellow, and I may here mention that afterwards he became perhaps one of the greatest friends I ever had in my life.

What I asked him for to begin with were labourers (men and women), brick and tile makers, joiners, masons, and stone quarriers. These he speedily sent me in moderate numbers, but sufficient to begin with, and tools I got up from Mhow and elsewhere.

I now traced out the foundations, and they were soon excavated. Masons built them in with stone and clay. The bricks being made, the wall commenced, but then came the question of wood—Where was it to be got? Nothing was to be found near by, except the small Babul (Acacia) tree, and from this, with some difficulty, we made the window and door frames, but the trusses for the roof required large timber, as they were "Queen Post," and the span was 24 feet.

After much enquiry and writing here and there, we ultimately got them from Delhi, the nearest place where teak wood could be obtained, and then they had to be carted in bullock carts about 400 miles, costing Rs. 8 or 16s. a cubic foot. This was enormous, but, taking Colonel Waddington's designs and scantlings, the amount of wood used was comparatively trifling. These scantlings are most beautifully calculated, and should be universally used with teak or oak at least; they are infinitely to be preferred to Tredgold's, unless there is plenty of wood to waste and plenty of money to pay for it.

In the Indian forests there are some excellent woods which were never used, because they were not known, some of them quite superior to teak, but only procurable in limited quantities. While at Neemuch I got samples of eight or ten of the best kinds and tested them. The result and the samples I sent to Headquarters, at Bombay, where they may be still.

HOW TO PRESERVE WOOD FROM WHITE ANTS.

When at Nusserabad a year or more after this, I was told of an excellent recipe for preventing the destruction of wood by white ants, which I may just as well give here, and which I afterwards used regularly with great success. It was told me by a native, and we tried it.

In our wood-yard a tank of concrete was constructed about 12 ft. long, 4 ft. wide, and 3 ft. deep. Into it we put about 20 "mutkas" (earthen vessels containing say 4 gallons) of horse ammonia, which was procured from the cavalry lines by paying the ghora wallas a small sum for collecting it, then 4 or 5 lbs. of pounded orris root stirred up with it, and the tank filled up with water. The ammonia set this mixture fermenting, and after

the fermentation was over it was ready for the wood, which was soaked in it or painted with it as most convenient.

I put two pieces of wood, one soaked and the other unsoaked, into a white ant's nest one evening; next morning the unsoaked piece was quite honeycombed, but that which had been in the mixture remained untouched for a week or more, when it was taken out, the ants having deserted their earthen pyramid.

One day it was found that the cavalry saddles, which hung on the wooden racks fixed in the barrack walls of the 8th Hussars, were being completely destroyed by these little pests. The Colonel applied officially to me in his trouble, and a man was sent over to paint the racks, going as close to the wall as possible. Not only were the saddles never touched again, but the white ants decamped altogether, completely leaving the buildings.

A BEAUTIFUL RIDE.

FAIRYLAND AND A STONE QUARRY.

Nobody could have a higher opinion of the beauty of Rajpootana than myself, and the ride I took to visit the stone quarry, from which the long roofing stones for the Barracks were taken, was a most enjoyable treat. We rode over low rounded hills of the limestone type, with rich valleys intervening every here and there, highly cultivated. The surrounding hills were fertile too—they were covered with high-growing grass in abundance, thickly interspersed with flowering creepers, a lovely but neglected garden. A few cattle only were to be seen, standing up to their middles in herbage.

But the little valley below was the most beautiful scene I ever beheld. The little village, where the owners and cultivators lived, nestled at one end under the shade of a cluster of umbrageous banyan trees; in the centre of the valley was one large banyan tree, under which was a well with a pair or two of bullocks drawing up the water, to the song of the native driver for the irrigation of the land.

The people in this district, being under their own native rulers, were not subjected to restrictions, and they grew the poppies from which the opium is made according to their own fancies. It was spring, and these garden fields were all in full bloom; they were all the same size, and square, fitted together like a draught-board. Each villager, it seemed, owned one field or perhaps more, and each grew the poppy which he fancied

produced the best results, so every square was of a different colour. Some had all red poppies, some all white, others all purple, while many preferred a mixture of all colours.

My path led over these numerous hilly undulations, and, when I got to the top of each, the view below me not many yards away was, without exception, the most beautiful of the sort I have ever beheld in any part of the world in all my long life.

The picture spread out below me consisted of the valley, with the little village at one end, the draught-board of bright shining poppies taking up all the flat ground, and in the centre the huge, dark-green banyan tree, the well, and the bullocks. All this was surrounded by a framework of low, grass-green hills, glittering with bright-coloured flowers like precious stones, and, to make this beautiful scene still more enchanting, we had a bright sun, a cool breeze, and the melodious, though, perhaps, monotonous song of the bullock-driver as he poured the clear, sparkling water into the hundred little channels to supply the beautiful poppies with nourishment.

In my 12 or 15-mile ride I came across at least half-a-dozen such settlements, each one completely hidden from the other.

It was a most enjoyable ride—the first I had had since reaching Neemuch months before, for up to then it was considered dangerous for any of us to go beyond the outlying pickets, and, when I got home, I felt almost as if I had been paying a visit to fairyland, or had seen a vision.

In writing these chapters, I often think that a few, at least, of those who read them may some day desire for health or pleasure to take a winter trip to India, now that the facilities for such trips are so much improved. They might do worse than, with tents and servants, to follow my footsteps about Rajpootana for a few cool months. It will be a good long journey, for I have a great deal more to say about that State before I get out of it.

THE QUARRY.

The quarry was all that could be wished, of argillaceous (clay) formation. The stone is taken out in "slates," so to speak, 20 feet square or more, and 6 or 8 inches thick, and these huge slates are, for convenience of carriage, cut up into pieces about a foot or 18 inches wide, and from 6 to 24 feet long, as required. The roof of the Artillery Barrack was taken from this quarry, also that of the wing of the Residency. What would we not give for such a quarry here in Roxburghshire?

SIMILAR QUARRIES FURTHER NORTH.

It may here be noted that the quarries that I found used in the north of Rajpootana for similar purposes, yielding stones of about the same size, are not "argillaceous," but "mica schist," of igneous formation; the long stones are not split, for there is no "cleavage" as with the slate, they are hewn out of the rock. But they answer their purpose admirably, save that they break rather more readily. I used them at Nusserabad for the roofs of a set of European Provost Cells that I built, and at Ajmeer for a large district "Radiating" Gaol, to accommodate 100 native prisoners, which I designed and built, and also at the same place for the roofs of the guard-rooms and other public stone buildings in the Native Infantry lines, also designed and erected by me.

I have said that these large, heavy, stone slabs sometimes crack in the centre and give way, but they do not come down, as might be thought, for the parapet walls built along the ends keep them up until they can be replaced; and it is very seldom that they do crack.

Chapter XI.

A PERILOUS JOURNEY.

THE SIEGE OF KOTAH.

TIME went on: Kotah, the fortified native capital of the State of the same name, was in the hands of the rebels. The 72nd Highlanders as a regiment marched up from Ahmedabad, halting at Neemuch for a week *en route* to raise the siege, and were the first regiment to occupy my new barracks. The 8th Hussars moved about the surrounding country keeping watch, and operating actively when necessary. The 96th, under Colonel Thesiger, late Lord Chelmsford, marched through Nusserabad to Neemuch and on to Kotah, where the siege, which lasted a considerable time, was going on. Ultimately Kotah was taken, and the prize —owing principally to the presence of the Rhanee of Jhansi's jewels —was the richest individually that was ever known. The share of a private soldier counted by thousands of rupees, I was told.

General Whitlock commanded the troops at the siege, and his son was afterwards in the 83rd Regiment. This young man's mesmeric experiences are recorded in Chapter VII.

I AM HANDED OVER TO THE GOVERNMENT OF BOMBAY.

At this time the two European Companies of the 83rd were ordered to rejoin Headquarters at Nusserabad, and the Neemuch Fort was no longer garrisoned, in consequence of which I was freed from military duty, except in the capacity of a military engineer moving with troops when required, and had to find quarters outside, being now entirely under the civil authorities. It was not difficult for me to find good quarters. I took possession of a stable of six stalls near my office, turned two stalls into a bedroom and two into a sitting-room, by building mud walls up to the roof, which I also put on, and making some windows. The two remaining stalls were used to stow away what little "impedimenta" I had with me.

MY ATTACK OF FEVER, AND SICK LEAVE.

Of this new home my experience was not a pleasant one, for I had only been a few weeks in it when I was seized with a bad fever. It was a more severe attack than I usually had, and probably nearly a month elapsed before I could call myself convalescent, and then those good but troublesome fellows, the doctors, urged that I must go away to the hills, or my health would be imperilled. What was the situation if I went? I should lose my fine pay and allowances, and, perhaps, eventually have to rejoin my regiment or the depôt; and then, would I get the place again? Or possibly I might be invalided home, which would not suit me at all; besides, who was there to take my place? The prospect was very disappointing, as well as perplexing. But the medical men were inexorable: I must go up to Mount Aboo for a couple of months. This being settled, application was made to Headquarters at Bombay for two months' sick leave on medical certificate, and in due time it was granted. But how was I to get to Mount Aboo? The whole country was in a disturbed state; the "Bheel" country was in arms against us; the road was long round by Parantij; and the passes were difficult and excessively dangerous, for they were all more or less in the hands of these "Bheel" robbers—thieves and cut-throats by profession. The only resting-place in 125 miles was Kherwara, an unfortified British cantonment containing one native regiment, in the middle of the Bheel country. However, there were my orders, and I must go. I had a thorough knowledge of the languages, the natives, their customs and religions, and, above all, I had great confidence in myself. I had less doubt about overcoming the difficulties than many of my friends. I would go, that I had determined, so I sent to my friend the Vakeel, and asked him to give me an escort of 4 horsemen (Sowars), and such letters to the heads of towns and villages as would ensure my being helped on by them all. Instead of sending me the help I asked, he came himself to my office, and gave me his views of the dangers I was courting. He declared I would never get through the journey alive, and earnestly implored me not to think of going, but my reply was decided—"I will go, and take the risk." "Then," said he, "I will let all the province see how I love you; I will take you the first two days' journey with me on my elephant, and will make such a demonstration as will attract the attention of all the province, but, remember, my influence extends no further than the border of the State of Oodipoor."

THE JOURNEY IS BEGUN.

On the following day, I, with my humble little retinue of 6 or 7 servants, 4 camels, a pony, and a bullock "shigram," met my friend on the glacis of the fort at the entrance gate, with his horsemen, his spearmen, and his matchlock men (who kept up a constant fusillade), his tents and servants, men with flags and banners and tom-toms, and his two fine elephants splendidly caparisoned, and his led horses. His own elephant was made to kneel down as we approached. My cavalcade was halted about 50 yards from his, and made as great a display as my head man could manage with the limited number of servants and animals at his disposal.

The great man advanced to meet me in gorgeous apparel, with gold lace, turban, &c. I met him in my humble shooting coat of brown khaki, with white wicker helmet. He embraced me, shook hands, and finally led me to his elephant, where, amidst firing of guns and beating of tom-toms, he seated me beside him on his splendid howda. Then the elephants rose, and we started on our first day's journey.

The first march was to a small village about 10 miles away, and, by the time we arrived there, the sun was high. Our tents were pitched under separate trees, but we held some communication, and next morning, but not before daylight, we marched another 10 miles, starting, as before, with pomp and ceremony. In the afternoon of that day, my friend the Vakeel and his men left to return, and shortly afterwards I started on my perilous journey.

FOUL PLAY WITH HER MAJESTY'S MAIL.

We travelled by night, and, being still very weak from my illness, I had a bed made in my bullock shigram, where I lay rolled up in my blanket, my drawn sword by my side and my loaded pistol in my hand, as usual, taking as much sleep as I could under the circumstances of very rough roads, or, rather, no roads at all. We started away early as our march was to be a long one, about 20 miles. In the middle of the night our cavalcade was suddenly halted. In a moment I was up and at the door of my shigram, which was made like a small gentleman's omnibus, with door behind, and drawn by two splendid Gujerati bullocks, white as snow, and of enormous size.

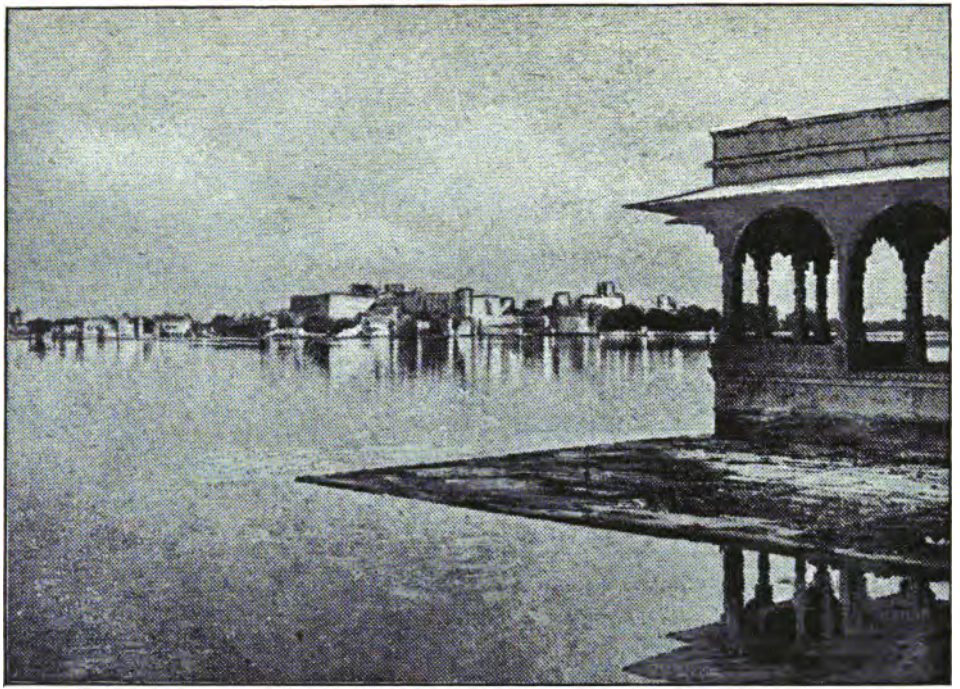
There was a bright moon, but nothing that I could see, and no noise or sound at all. In a few minutes, however, my head man and the Corporal of my small guard came to the back of the column

where I was, and reported that they had come, in the middle of the road, on a post-runner, lying there quite insensible, with his head smashed in, the post-bag cut open, and the letters scattered all over the place. Of course, I at once went forward, and found the poor fellow lying there bleeding. The wound had been made with the butt end of the hilt of a tulwar (sword). The rivets which fasten the blade into the handle of these weapons are, for the sake of ornament, made to taper away like a corrugated cone, and this point had been driven with great force through the man's forehead into his skull. Nothing could be done for him at such a place and time, so I had him lifted into the bed in my shigram, which I had just vacated, and carried along with us to our destination, together with the letters which we picked up; while I walked along for the rest of the march.

A little after daylight we came to the village where we were to halt for the day, and which would supply myself and my men with milk, firewood, and other necessaries. My tent was pitched in a large Tank which was nearly empty, this position being selected because our encampment was thus hidden from sight by the high bank of the reservoir. While this was being done I examined the man's wound, he being still insensible, rubbed it over with some sweet oil, and having no brandy I tried, but without avail, to administer a little port wine. In the cool of the evening I hired men with a stretcher to carry him to his own station only a few miles further, but he never recovered consciousness, and died before he got there.

WHAT WE SAW FROM THE TOP OF THE TANK BANK.

We had not long been in our camping ground when columns of black smoke were seen rising to the east, and on enquiry we found that there were out in the district a party of armed men on 20 camels who were raiding all round, and where the villages refused to give them what they demanded, they were in the habit of setting them on fire in a light-hearted sort of way, and going on to the next. The burning village was about 5 miles away, and as nothing intervened on the dead level plain before us, we could see from the top of the tank bank nearly up to the walls. So I placed one of the Sowars in this spot, with orders to bring to my tent immediate information if he should see anything suspicious, or anybody even advancing our way. Then I went to my little tent, and, after some sort of breakfast, lay down to sleep till sundown, when, if it pleased



The City of Oodipoor, from one of the island palaces, where Lieut. Sprot, Assist. Ex-Engineer, Rajpootana Field Force, was lodged for ten days by the Raja during the Mutiny in 1858, when on his perilous journey from Neemuch to Deesa and Mount Aboo *vid* Parantage.

God we should not be disturbed by the raiders, we would again start for our next night's march. Nothing did happen, and as soon as it was dark we marched off.

WE ARRIVE AT OODIPOOR.

In the two or three more marches we took there was no further adventure, until one morning, when a mile or two from the gates of Oodipoor, we were met by a large procession of horsemen, who practically took possession of us, and we had not gone much further when His Majesty the Rajah came forward to meet me (at the instigation of my friend the Vakeel). He dismounted from his horse, gave me, in the usual manner, the most cordial welcome, and, after remounting, he himself led me to one of the marble Summer Palaces of Oodipoor, on the shore of the large and glittering lake, which is one of the features of that beautiful capital. Then, seeing that we were all comfortably settled, he took an affectionate farewell of me, and I remained in this unique spot for nearly a fortnight.

But, although my kind friend, the Rajah, had taken his departure, his liberality did not end there. Very shortly after he had gone, there came such a procession as I had never seen—sheep, goats, sweetmeats, milk, bread, ghee, hay, gram (which we use in India instead of oats), and I don't know what else besides, for, as well as myself, he took charge of my servants, sending them every conceivable thing that a native likes for his food, not forgetting tobacco. And when we left, not a pice were either they or I allowed to pay.

The situation was a lovely one; we were on almost an island on the shore of the lake, about half-a-dozen yards from the clear rippling water, and the gravel of that shore was composed of white quartz and marble pebbles only. The house was most comfortable, the beau ideal of a convalescent home for a sick man for a fortnight, and that was just what I made it.

A FRESH ESCORT, AND ON TO KHERWARA.

Having thoroughly enjoyed my fourteen days on the pearly shingle of the Oodipoor Lake, it was time to be moving on, and I intimated my intention to my host. He came to say good-bye, and ordered me an escort of four Sowars, to take the place of those returned to Neemuch. We packed our camels one fine evening and prepared for a start, but, as we had to pass through a part of the city, and the gates were not opened till daylight,

we could only get away a little before sunrise, therefore our march on that day was made a short one.

"A SOFT ANSWER TURNETH AWAY WRATH."

As soon as the camels were ready to start, I moved off with my cavalry escort, and as usual entered into conversation with them. I was not quite satisfied with either their looks or their manners, but I was determined to find out what was wrong, so, as we rode through the corner of the city, I questioned them pretty hard. Was it something I had said, or was it their own spontaneous feelings, I wondered?

Just after we had crossed out of the ditch, and were talking hard, suddenly, in a moment, I had their four gleaming swords over my head. To draw my pistol would have been madness; I might have shot one, or, perhaps, two of them, but what then? So, without moving a muscle, I held high my right hand, with the three centre fingers stretched out, and repeated solemnly the "Kaleemer," or Mahommedan profession of faith. There are two distinct Mahommedan sects, one consisting of those who believe in the five Califs, called Shiahs, found chiefly in Persia, and the other, those who believe only in three, called Sunnis, who are found further to the east. This difference of sect is indicated by the number of fingers held up in invocation.

The escort hesitated, looked at me, and when I motioned quietly to them, they put up their weapons. Then I went on talking to them, and so impressed them that, before reaching our camping ground, they were all my sworn friends.

The Bheels were all "out," we should have to march through their passes, and the men believed we could never get through. But when I had persuaded them that God was on our side, and that He would surely never allow a hair of our heads to be touched by such people, they gained courage, and afterwards the Corporal said to me, "Sahib, you will be safe with us; no man shall approach you except over our dead bodies." I slept comfortably in my bullock shigram, being fully convinced they would act up to what they said, and keep watch. Finally, after two or three days, we reached Kherwara, through the blessing of God, without further adventure.

KHERWARA.

This Native Regiment cantonment, which was garrisoned by one Native Irregular Regiment, was one of the eight canton-

ments which very shortly after this time came under my own charge. It was in the middle of the Bheel country, and the Commandant held the post of political agent in that part of the State. There I found five or six officers and a little mess, to which I was invited, and afterwards made an honorary member. One of the bungalows of an officer who was absent was placed at my disposal, and in it I felt so comfortable that it was my intention to stay for a few days at least. But when, at breakfast the next morning, the Commanding Officer told me that the district between there and Parantij was so much disturbed that it would be impossible for me to leave the protection of the Regiment for at least a fortnight, I was—to put it mildly—very much upset. It was in vain I tried to persuade him to allow me to take the short cut through the jungles to Deesa or Mount Aboo, on the plea that I knew the ground and the villages from having gone on shooting expeditions there; leave the cantonment I should not, until things had quieted sufficiently, so there I had to stay for, I think, twenty days or more.

AT LAST I START, AND HAVE A GOOD SEND-OFF.

Nothing could have exceeded the kindness of the officers while I did remain, and when permission was given me to go on my way, they laid their horses along the road, which, with my own grey Arab, covered nearly 100 miles. My kit and my servants started three days before me, and "on the said appointed day" I started off very early in the morning "by moonlight, alone," and galloped through my 100 miles by the middle of the day. When I got to the end of my ride, which had been most enjoyable in the cool of the morning, I found my cavalcade and kit had arrived, and they were putting up the tent in such a pretty spot on the bank of a bright rippling stream at the foot of the jungle-covered hills, which came down on both sides to the very water's edge. Then came a "tub" and breakfast, or, rather, lunch, and a good sleep during the heat of the day.

MY WAYS OF MARCHING.

It was my custom, all the time I was in Rajpootana, which was nearly three years, to make my long marches in this wise so as to economise all our strength; and when I tell my reader that my average travelling, during the time I was there, was, by my record book, over 800 miles a month, and in some months over 1000, they will understand how necessary it was to have these

marches excessively well organised, as on every occasion I was accompanied by my servants, my camels, my tents, and my four Surati goats.

Of course, we were dependent on halting near a village, where some sort of supplies were available for the men I had with me, and so the rule was made that our marches must be from 30 to 35 miles each night. At sundown the camels came in, tents were folded up and loaded on to the "ships of the desert," together with all baskets, boxes, and bundles, and just as darkness set in all marched away, except myself, my horse, one man, and a camel. When they were started, I lay down on my so-called bed, and, with a light blanket over me, soon went to sleep, until the old "alarm," which I carried always on my pistol belt (and even now still use occasionally), went off with a bang. Before turning in, I always set it carefully at the time I wished to rise, and placed it on a flat stone near my head. When it went off in the early morning I got up, did what little dressing was necessary, and my horse being saddled I started away, leaving my man and the camel with my charpoy and bedding to follow. As it was always somewhere about 1 or 2 in the morning, and dark or moonlight, which though better than black darkness, is always treacherous, my progress at first was somewhat slow, but as soon as the first streak of daylight appeared, my little Arab and I slipped away pretty fast, and we usually overtook the kit a mile or two before it arrived at the camping ground.

On these occasions, it was very amusing to watch the goats; they were always the first things that came in sight as I trotted along—well-bred, smooth-haired animals, black or black and tan, and first-rate milkers. There they were, up on their hind legs, all four of them, rapidly devouring the leaves of some stunted bush that grew by the roadside, and when they had completely stripped it, or my man called them, down they dropped on all fours and started away at a great pace till they overtook the things, and then, whenever another green bush came in view, up they went again, and the whole performance was repeated. One thing that I was always sure of on reaching our camping ground was a good hot basin of coffee, and plenty of milk.

MORE DIFFICULTIES.

After my 100-mile gallop from Kherwara, I had a good rest that afternoon, and at sunset my servants and camels marched away, just as I have described. Next morning I was up and away pretty early, daylight came, and trotting the old grey along

sharply, I soon overtook my escort, this time of Native Irregular Infantry from the Kherwara contingent, a Naik and 6 Bheels. No sooner did I come alongside them than the Naik commenced to tell me that a very few miles from Parantij there had been a "bloody battle," the "Sahib logue" had as usual got the best of it, but not very much, and everywhere the conquered Bheels were lying in wait for such as us; we would certainly all be murdered if we went on, and we must at once return to Kherwara. It was imperative, he said, "we *must* go back." I told him that was impossible, no Englishman knew what it was to turn back, and that go I should, at least to Parantij, two days' march yet, where we should hear more about what had taken place, and that if he and his men presumed to return to Kherwara without my permission, he and they would surely be tried by Court-Martial, and very possibly shot and put in a hole, like the police at Neemuch had been.

In this way, I, so to speak, drove my Bheel escort into Parantij, which we finally reached one day at about 7 A.M. There was here what was called a "Travellers' Bungalow," a thing we had not seen since we left Nusserabad months ago, but, of course, when we heard of it, we took up our quarters there, and were much more comfortable than we should have been camping on the dirty outskirts of a large native town.

We had not been in very long when my Bheel Naik came at me again. He had now heard all about it—to proceed as we had intended was impossible. He would, he said, take me round by Ahmedabad and up the main road to Deesa, where troops were continually moving. He said that the battle had been fought a couple of miles out, and, to prove his assertion, added that if I rode out there I should still see the dead bodies all lying about, and the crows and vultures feeding on them in hundreds. (I did see this ghastly sight afterwards.) He further stated that Captain Campbell, with 28 Sowars, was camped outside the town; they had been in the fight, and would tell me all about it. By this time I had finished my breakfast, and was thinking of having my nap, so I appeased the Naik by telling him that when I awoke for my lunch at 1 o'clock, I would go over and see Captain Campbell about it.

MY INTERVIEW WITH CAPTAIN CAMPBELL.

About 1 o'clock I got up, washed and dressed, and sat down to my lunch, intending afterwards to make a formal call on Captain

Campbell, but before I had finished, that officer, having no doubt received a hint from my Bheel, came to call upon me. His object was to give me a full account of all that had taken place, and he did so in quite a clear and lucid manner. His story was identical with my Bheel's version of the affair, and he ended with the same warning—"It is unsafe for you or anyone to go through that district at present." I thanked him for so kindly giving me the information, but told him I had quite made up my mind to go on; I had been so delayed at Kherwara that I could not allow myself to be put off my road any longer. "Well," he said, "if you must go, I will take half my men and come with you three days' journey, which will see you over the worst of the district."

He came that evening with a dozen Sowars, and for the next three days' march I was under their care; on the fourth day he returned, but left me 6 men and a Sergeant. With this escort I went another day's march, and found, as I had done all the way from Parantij, that everything, as far as I could see, was quite quiet, so, before we left for the next march, I told my Sergeant and his Sowars that, as all now seemed peaceful, I could get on quite well with the Bheel guard, and as Captain Campbell had explained to me how much they were wanted with him, I would not detain them any longer than the end of the next march.

IN A TERRIBLE DIFFICULTY.

We duly arrived at our next halting place, a nice group of green trees, and my little tent was pitched at the end of them in the shade. In front of me was a long sandy plain of about half-a-mile, with the walled village of Visnagur at the end of it; there was not a soul to be seen, and, as usual, I breakfasted and lay down to sleep, having given orders for some reason that we would march at 3 in the afternoon.

I was having a lovely sleep, "dreaming of all things gay," when someone came to the door of the tent and began to talk. I sat up on the edge of my "charpoy," and, looking out, there stood that confounded Bheel Naik. "What do you want now?" I asked. "Sahib," he said, "those Aswars (another term for Sowars) have gone back; we cannot go on; we shall all have our throats cut; we must go back; we cannot stay here." If ever I allowed myself to be provoked by anyone in my life, it was with that fellow then, so I told him in good Hindustani, "they might go to the d——,"

and, having given vent to my feelings in these few terse words, I stretched myself out again, turned on my bed "like a door on its hinge," and went straight off into dreamland once more.

At about half-past two my servants were astir, making preparations to start, and after a bit they came to take down my tent. While thus employed, one of them quietly said, "Those Bheels, Sahib, those useless Bheels have left us; they said they would come no further; the cowards were afraid they would have their throats cut, and they have gone back to Parantij."

AN AWKWARD DILEMMA.

This was indeed a terrible blow to me. "What shall I do?" I said to myself; and, as was my wont, I sat down to think it over, and this was what passed through my mind—"Here am I, miles away from everywhere and everybody, in the middle of a very disturbed and mutinous district, in the midst of a bloody war, and in a land of professional robbers, and not a semblance even of a guard of any description, all my servants unarmed, and only a little toy pistol in my own pocket. I wrote all my kind friends in Bombay and elsewhere, when I left Neemuch, that I should be at Deesa in ten days or a fortnight's time, and here I am, after more than a month, in this jungle, little more than half-way. I must not lose a day if possible; the tent is down and the camels half packed, and the long shades of evening have already come on. This is a terrible dilemma; never again, never will I say 'Jehanum ku jow' to anyone, no, not even in joke; but I will at once send for the head-man of the village and see what he can do for us." So, calling my "Puttawalla," I bade him brush himself up, put on his clean clothes, brighten up his belt and his putta, and go straight away to the village, and there ask the head-man to come and speak to me. I sat and watched him walk all the way to the gate of the city, then fidgeted about, forever looking back at that gate, but nobody came, and I was indeed becoming very anxious, when, at the end of half-an-hour or so, I saw a number of people emerge from the gateway and walk straight towards me. My puttawalla was amongst them, and in time they came up to our camp. They were all Bheels, all grey-bearded old men clothed in clean white linen, and each had his "tulwar" under his arm. We exchanged "salaams," then I asked them to be seated on the ground in front of me, while I sat on a portable camp chair.

Then I addressed them, telling them how I was situated, mainly, indeed entirely, owing to the cowardly behaviour of my Bheel guard.

I had known the Bheels in all these wide districts for long; I had lived amongst them for weeks at a time whilst shooting tigers; we had always got on well together, and I had the highest opinion of the honour and bravery of the whole Bheel nation, but how had these men treated me? They were afraid to come on the line of march; was not that a disgrace to the whole tribe under the circumstances? "You," I said, "you who are Bheels and the patriarchs of the people, you have it in your power to remedy this state of affairs, and I feel confident you will do so. Send me an escort to take me on to Deesa, where the 'Sircar' has directed me to proceed at all hazards." "Wah! wah! Sahib," they said, "Wah! wah! not a hair of your head, nor a stitch of your kit, shall be touched; we will see to that, and will send you a guard that will take you safely into Deesa." Then we parted with the usual formality; they offered me the hilts of their swords, which I went through the form of touching with my finger, and having, with my usual good luck, made friends of them, they all took their departure, and again I watched them inside the gate of their city, but with quite different feelings from those with which I had watched them come out.

Then the servants set to work with a will. The camels were laden, the bullocks put to, and there we stood waiting for our escort, but our escort did not appear! Were they going to deceive us? Surely not. At last, whilst we were anxiously looking towards the gate, a very small, black, shrivelled-up, white-bearded old man, without any clothes on except a "languti," sauntered up, with a bow and two small arrows in his hand, and said, "Sahib, I am sent by the head of my village to accompany you to Deesa; there is another of us coming, but we need not wait; he will soon overtake us." This was our escort, and we started.

WE GET ON SPLENDIDLY AND ARRIVE AT DEESA.

Under the circumstances, I thought it better to accompany my kit, so I marched all night with the servants, and on the second night did the same, reaching Sidhpoor Travellers' Bungalow at daylight. From there it was simple work, the road was fairly well protected, and we had nothing to do but march straight on to Deesa. The last march we made in the afternoon, and arrived at a little village close to Deesa just after dark, from which we could see, about a mile off, the lights of the cantonment. I had once been quartered at Deesa for several years, and had had a house of my own for two years, so I imagined I knew every turn in the road, but time had effaced them from my memory, also it was a dark night,

and my servants were all new to the place, and did not know as much about it as I did myself. In this condition of things it was necessary to have a guide (Boomier), and going straight to that quarter of the village where I knew they lived, I found a number of them inside a small enclosure of thorns, sitting round the embers of a fire warming their hands.

As was usual, I rode up to the stile and demanded the services of one of these men to guide me to camp. Not one of them moved. I remonstrated, and they began to laugh at me, and, if I am not mistaken, one of them said, "Jehanum ku jow," or something very like it. This was rather too much for me, so, dismounting quietly and leaving my dear old Arab to stand by himself, which he always did obediently when required, I drew my little pistol from its leather case (for the first time in earnest), walked up to one big fellow, and taking him by one ear, while I pressed the cold muzzle against the other, I said, "Now, you get up and come along with me; if you resist, I will fire." When he found me in earnest, he wisely submitted, and I marched him over the stile to where my horse stood; then I said, "Hold that stirrup-leather while I mount," and, having mounted, I made the man take hold of the right stirrup-leather with his left hand under my leg, and said, "Now, you take care you don't let go till I give you permission, for the moment I feel your hand withdrawn, I shall fire; I may miss you in the dark, but I should not advise you to try."

Holding my reins in the left hand and the pistol in my right, I marched thus into camp at the head of my impedimenta, and at last reached the Travellers' Bungalow at Deesa in safety. "All's well that ends well." "Thanks be to Almighty God, whose hand has led me safely through all these difficulties, my perilous journey is at an end."

ADVISABILITY OF LIGHT REVOLVERS ON SERVICE.

As I have mentioned before, this was the first time I had ever drawn my revolver with intent to use it, but I take the opportunity now of relating an occurrence which went far to prove that the theory I always held, and still hold, that officers should carry very light revolvers in time of war, but never part from them, even for a few brief minutes, is the correct one.

It would be in the year 1859, when, as Executive Engineer, I was accompanying a small Field Force under Colonel Holmes, one of half-a-dozen or more in pursuit of "Tantia Topi" and "Maun Singh," moving north in line up Rajpootana and Gwalior,

driving the enemy in front of us. When with this Force, I carried out the duties of Intelligence Officer as well as my own. We marched away one morning at 1 A.M., and, when daylight came, I noticed, as I rode in the rear of the Force, some wild ducks flying overhead, and each one as it came suddenly shot down into some very high bulrushes, perhaps a couple of hundred yards from the roadside. It was a very small place indeed, but, seeing so many darting down into it, I concluded there must be a great gathering. I was on horseback at the time, but close by was my "Sanery," or trotting camel, on the back of which, with a few other things, were strapped my two guns. I stopped him, sat him down, and unstrapped my 12-bore flat-capped Sam Smith, loaded one barrel with No. 4, and the other with a green cartridge, and started to explore the bulrushes. Meanwhile, the Force and its impedimenta passed on. I came gently up to the "wee bit" patch, but saw nothing, until very slowly and carefully I pushed aside the rushes with the muzzle of my gun. Inside this fringe was a small pool of water, not so big as the room I am writing in, and such a sight I never saw, and never could have believed. There must have been something underneath the water very good indeed, for the whole of the surface was literally paved with little ducks' tails; their heads were all under the water. In a few seconds, however, I was detected, and they rose like the roar of thunder all together. When about 3 feet from the water, I pulled the trigger, shooting right into the "brown" of them, and afterwards I picked up just 12 ducks; more may have gone away wounded, and some may have hidden themselves in the thicket of bulrushes, but I put 12 in the bag as the result of my first shot (the biggest I ever made with a "cripple stopper"), and I singled out and killed just 1 with my second barrel, in which was the cartridge. (*N.B.*—With a Staunchon gun, out of which I used to fire half-a-pound of powder and 3 lbs. of No. 4 shot when shooting in Holland, I have several times killed and picked up, with the aid of the "cripple stopper," as many as 80 to 90. It had a 2-inch bore, and was in its day the most powerful duck gun on the Thames.) When I did this I was alone, but, seeing a native in a field not far off, I induced him for a few annas to help me on to camp with my load.

I hope I may be pardoned this digression, but now let us see what came out of it.

Walking along with this man afterwards, I thought, to improve the shining hour, I would get into conversation with him on the subject of the War, and the whereabouts of "Tantia Topi" and

"Maun Singh," and I very shortly heard from him that they were close ahead of us. They had only just left the village he pointed to close by, and were going to so-and-so, where they would halt for the night. "Is this true? Could we catch them?" I thought to myself; "anyhow, I'll see if I can't get the attempt made." We had had a long march of 18 miles that morning, and the halting-place of the enemy was at least 25 further; but then the Force was in first-rate order, marching and counter-marching almost daily for the previous two months and more; they could do it, I felt sure.

As soon as I got into camp, which the men were just engaged in pitching, I trotted off to the village and found my information was quite correct; then to the Commanding Officer, in whose tent we had a Council of War. Yes, we will try it, not a word is to be breathed, at 3 o'clock (it was then 8 A.M.); the bugle would blow the "fall-in," and away we would march at once, leaving the Quartermaster to bring up the kit.

This was capitally well carried out, and at 3 P.M. away we went. Very shortly after starting, as my reader may suppose, our object leaked out. Before morning, or at daylight, we should have a brush with the enemy; they were all there, both Armies together—great excitement. Let us see to our pistols; we shall probably need them; but where were the pistols—those fine, large, heavy Colts and Tranters—pistols that would stop any man, however furious the onslaught might be. Where were the officers' pistols? All left behind, packed up with the baggage coming on, far too heavy to carry, except Sprot's "twopenny half-penny toy," as they used contemptuously to call my little revolver. I guess I had the best of that round.

THE END OF OUR FORCED MARCH.

Perhaps my readers would like to know how this business ended. Everything had been arranged perfectly; the men, both European and native, marched splendidly; all were full of expectation. Silence throughout the night was well maintained; no fires were lit—not even a pipe. We arrived exactly at the right time at the right place. Orders were given to load and be ready to deploy, which operation was just being commenced in a most orderly manner, when a scout arrived with the news that the rebels had that moment bolted. We had no Cavalry, but the whole line rushed forward like hares. The enemy was gone, but their fires were burning, and the "chupatties" they left behind frying came in useful for our men.

OUR CAMP THAT NIGHT.

As might have been expected, the force had quite outmarched its baggage. The only things that came up that day were my own well-trained, hardy camels—which I from my tent door personally saw fed twice a-day with "gram" (the Indian grain used for horses), my servants, and the 4 Surati goats. So my tent was pitched, and crammed with officers. I and another slept on my charpoy or bed, 3 slept under it, and 3 or 4 more lay down on the ground, over which my tent carpet was spread. Next morning the baggage came up. We halted a day, and then marched to Jaipur. Here I separated from the force, having received instructions to visit, inspect, and report on the Sambhar Salt Lake and its surroundings, and I took with me a wounded officer—a Major in my own 83rd Regiment.

OUR MARCH TO SAMBHAR.

It was clear to me that our march round by Sambhar, and so back to Nusserabad, would not be altogether a picnic. We should have what we shot to eat, but nothing else—though flour would be procurable, so I must look to my ammunition. I had just 8 copper caps (Smith's large flat caps) that would fit my gun, and we should be out at least 10 days more. Great care would have to be taken of these; the trigger must never be pulled unless I could get 3 or 4 or more duck at a shot. But we had some tea and the goats; and in due time off we went, shot only just the necessary quantum of ducks per day, and in 2 or 3 days got to Sambhar, where a native house—a very nice one indeed—was set apart as a Travellers' Bungalow. It was close on the edge of a little pond of sweet water; indeed, the balcony of my bedroom overhung it, and this little pond was perhaps the most beautiful sight of the sort one could ever see. It was perfectly covered with wild duck of many sorts; there were literally hundreds—they had only just room to swim. There was the mallard, or ordinary wild duck; the little teal, with the bright green feathers in his wing; the widgeon, with the tuft on his head; the sheldrake, with the white and variegated plumage; the pintail, a fine, plump bird; the little shoveller, going round and round the edge; and the large, black duck, besides ever so many other kinds. They were quite tame, and took no notice of me when I sat at the window. They were most particular, and would have nothing to do with any but their own class. All the mallards kept together, all the widgeon together, and so on, no one sort mixing with another.

We remained at this place for two nights, and watched the ducks from the balcony for hours—a marvellously pretty sight.

THE SALT LAKE.

This was not an inviting place—a vast expanse of light, reddish-brown earth, with pools of water about, and large salt-pans in which the salt was made. There was not a blade of grass, nor a vestige of vegetation, nor any living, moving thing—neither birds, beasts, nor fishes; a desolate place, in which I could get up no interest. I rode about by myself, as my companion's wounds prevented him from coming with me, and, after a couple of hours, came home for my dinner, and then we turned into bed for our second night, having arranged to march early next morning.

THE SCARE.

I had had a good sleep, and my alarm clock was on the point of going off, when the sound of a horse galloping past the bungalow awoke me. I was up in a moment and listening; there were more of them. I quickly put out my little lamp, and, running to my comrade's room, put his light out also, whispering to him to get up and dress quickly. Then I peeped through the shutters, and saw, in the dim starlight, a whole cavalcade of horsemen hurrying past. But what about the loafers? We had better take care. So I locked all the doors, and then, going for my wounded friend, I said, "Can you swim?" and, taking him to my room, we sat on the balcony quite quietly, ready to drop over into the pond if occasion required it. It was Maun Singh's beaten followers who were passing through; they tarried not, neither did they look back, and in a short time all was quiet.

Meanwhile it was getting light; we called the servants, who also, aware of the position, had been hiding like ourselves, bundled on to the camels the kit, which it had been unnecessary to unpack, as we had had a house to cover us, and before long were moving again. We went through the town of Sambhar, where most of the people kept inside their houses, and, by the aid of our map, had made some progress on our journey, when we became perplexed as to which path to take for Nusserabad, and had to ask our way at a village. The natives all bolted into their houses, and slammed the doors in our faces, so we had to send one of our party for the head-man, to get from him a Boomier. After a little while he came out, bringing a guide with him, and, when he came up to us, he said, holding up both his hands, "Wah! wah! Sahib. You English

are just like black ants, if stamped out in one place you come in another. Why—do you know that Maun Singh went through here last night with all his army?" We took our guide, and went on to our camping place, and in two or three days more reached Nusserabad safe and sound, and I handed over my wounded Major to the doctor.

AT DEESA—MY LETTERS.

THE PERILOUS JOURNEY MUST BE CONTINUED.

Arrived at Deesa, it was my first care to go for my letters, of which there was a goodly bundle. More than one was marked "On the Public Service only." The first that was opened was a semi-official from the Secretary of State in the Public Works Department, and the impression it left in my mind at the time was somewhat curious, showing, as it appeared to me, that the Bombay Government placed a much higher value on my services than I could have supposed myself. He regretted much that I had to leave my work at Neemuch, and hoped that my going to Mount Aboo on sick certificate would not prove a prelude to my leaving altogether the engineering work I had conducted so well. He trusted that I had no grievance against the Government, and that I did not think I had been neglected by them, or overlooked in any way, and assured me that such was not the case, as I would see, and he ended by telling me that my chief, Colonel Munbee, had been promoted General, and was starting for England on leave immediately; and he hoped I would be able to accept, and would not refuse the post of Executive Engineer, &c., &c., which my chief was vacating, and which would be offered me in an official letter by the same post. He also said that my presence was much needed at Nusserabad, and that if my health permitted of my going on there and taking over charge at once, the Government would like it.

The next letter which I hunted out was the official one, and I need say no more about it than that it intimated Colonel Munbee's departure, and appointed me to fill his place if I chose to accept it.

There was a third letter, also an official one, which is referred to on page 10, Appendix II. It informed me that General Roberts, commanding the Forces in Rajpootana, had mentioned my name in his despatches, and that "Copies of the Quartermaster-General's and General Roberts' letters had been sent forward to the Government of India, whom they begged to inform, with reference to arrangements reported in letter to Government No. 1525, that the

instances of Lieut. Sprot's intelligence and efficiency noticed in them were not the first for which he had obtained the commendation of the Bombay Government." The receipt of this letter was intensely gratifying to me, and I may here remark that shortly afterwards I received a second letter from the same source, which enclosed a copy of a letter, dated 26th August 1858, from the Supreme Government of India, which "notices with much gratification the testimony borne by the Military Authorities to the energy and ability displayed by Lieut. Sprot."

Of course, I was well enough to go on at once to the north, and, indeed, I need hardly say that, after such handsome treatment by both Governments, it would have taken a great deal to have deterred me from forthwith carrying out their wishes. But how was I to get through the 320 miles of very disturbed district that intervened between me and what was now my headquarters? There were continually convoys going up with stores, &c.; I would go with the very next, and I set off immediately to find out when that would be. At the office, however, they told me that it would be fully a fortnight, as it was not long since one had gone, but as the district was in a very disturbed state, I had better wait for the next. The quickest they could go with the bullock carts would be 10 or 12 miles a-day; it would take a month, in all six or seven weeks, before I could get up to Nusserabad. That would never do for me, so I sat down and thought, and this was what I did:—

My bullock driver was also a "jut" (camel driver, man who holds the same position to a riding camel that a groom does to a horse), so I called him and said, "Go into the bazaar and make enquiry, and see if you can buy me somewhere near here a good strong 'Sanari,' with saddle and saddle-bags all complete, and, if you can bring it along with you, so much the better." He was away all the next day, but on the afternoon of the third day he returned with a nice, strong, well-equipped camel, with the "owner up." I got on him, rode him about the cantonment and bazaar, and ultimately bought him for 150 rupees. He would take me an average of 40 miles a-day — that is, eight days for the journey. I would carry all I required in the way of food and drink with me—10 tins of hodge-podge, bought in the bazaar; a packet of sulphate of quinine; a bottle of port wine to take it with if required; 10 half-quartern loaves of bread; and an "Allblaze" pan to cook the food in; also my bed, my guns, and, of course, my pistol.

Next evening I started with my jut up behind, and drove

myself all the way. My baggage-camels, bullock cart, horses, and servant must be left behind to follow with the first convoy.

Between Mount Aboo and Pali was a bad district—we must travel by *dark;* I would get into the Travellers' Bungalows, and remain with the blinds down all day, cook my own food, and get on as best I could; while my jut, having stripped the Sanari of all his trappings, and himself of his clothes, spent the day in the jungle.

This was the plan laid down before starting, and just before dark that evening I slipped quietly away with my camel and my jut, unknown to anyone, and carried it out to the song of—

"Whither I goes, and how I fares—
Nobody knows, and nobody cares;
How I fares, and whither I goes—
Nobody cares, and nobody knows,"

reaching Nusserabad on the eighth day, just as I had planned it.

A DUST STORM.

"Nothing extraordinary occurred during this tour of duty," except that I encountered a dust storm. This is one of those things talked of by old Indians as if they were of frequent occurrence, but, although it is frequent enough to have a storm of high wind, with the dust blowing hard and thick, the dust-storm I encountered was of quite a different kind. It was like those one reads about as taking place in Egypt, when the camels lie down with their heads in the sand, but these are quite uncommon in India; during my travels in all the parts of India I was in for twelve years, I never encountered but two. The one that overtook me this time was at about two days' journey from Nusserabad, some 60 miles south of it. I had reached more tranquil parts, and was marching by daylight; all the morning we heard the rumbling of distant thunder—*interminable* thunder—not in claps, but a continuous rumble. It got louder and louder, and on the horizon, in the direction where I was going, it looked dark and black. This blackness got nearer and nearer, though it was quite bright and clear where we were riding; at last the blackness became more visible and defined—it looked like a gigantic brown wall which reached up to the clouds advancing towards us. On it came; I halted the camel in wonderment and suspense, and took in my surroundings as quickly as possible; it continued to come on still like a wall, until, in one instant, we were enveloped in darkness. When our eyes got accustomed to it, we were able to

proceed carefully along the road at a walk, and then in a short time came a few large drops, succeeded almost immediately by torrents of rain. I daresay the whole thing lasted an hour; we were wet to the skin, and glad indeed to get to the Travellers' Bungalow and have a change of clothes, for I need not say that I never went travelling without a complete change handy.

On the other occasion, which will be related hereafter, I was deprived of my change, caught a most severe cold, inflammation of the lungs succeeded, and ultimately, after going scatheless through all the hardships of this severe and lengthy campaign of three years, I had to be invalided home, much to my annoyance, and carried with me an attack of bronchitis and asthma, which lasted twenty years.

IN NUSSERABAD.

The morning after my arrival I found my way to the office, a small bungalow with one large room, two very small ones, and a "Zunana Khana" behind, into which the bedrooms opened, the walls being about 10 feet high, enclosing a piece of ground about 20 yards square; there was no door, the only way out of it being through the house. Three sides of the house were surrounded by a wide raised verandah, and at the opposite end to the enclosure was the Treasure Tumbrel, and the native guard which was always mounted over my house night and day. The verandahs were enclosed, and were occupied by the clerks and draughtsmen, five or six of each. An officer of Artillery had been placed in temporary charge, and nobody could have been more put out than he was at my unexpected arrival. They had not expected me for five or six weeks, as would have been the case had I waited for the convoy, and the loss of the high pay he would have drawn for this time so affected him that he was quite unable to conceal his disappointment. He pointed to the large writing-table and said, "These are all the papers I have, and as for the treasure, here is the key of the Tumbrel; it is all right, and if you like, you can count the rupees yourself." So saying, he marched out of the house, and I don't think I ever saw him again.

Chapter XII.

NUSSERABAD CANTONMENT.

THIS charmingly situated cantonment runs in one long street along the top of a level ridge; in front, the European lines of the soldiers, facing the parade ground; behind them came the officers' bungalows on both sides of the road, each standing in a "compound" of about half-an-acre of ground. The hospital was near the centre, between the officers' and soldiers' lines, the Cavalry lines were on the extreme west, and on the east side was the rather primitive English Church—a large square building with a very big thatched roof, which was used temporarily as a barrack for European troops passing through, while proper barracks, both Cavalry and Infantry, were in course of construction. Two Cavalry and four Infantry barracks had been built, and were occupied, and I had orders very soon to build four more for the Infantry, and also a row of married soldiers' quarters. These latter I myself designed, and built of stone and lime on a raised platform 3 feet high, with a large verandah in front, each with a living room and bedroom, and a kitchen behind. Most snug little places they were, tiled, nicely plastered and coloured, and very substantial; indeed, so good were they, that I had something very like a row with one regiment that came into those lines, because the younger officers preferred to live in them instead of going into the bungalows set apart for them, and this put the married soldiers to considerable inconvenience. There was a mystery about the men's new barracks that was very puzzling. The four new ones erected by me, on exactly the same plans as those put up by my predecessor, cost only half as much. The Bombay Office was greatly exercised in its mind about it, and sent the bill back "for correction," as they thought there had been some unaccountable mistake. The cause of the difference was this:—*Firstly*, my predecessor's were put up in time of war; *secondly*, having built four, there they stood for the contractors to follow without any question ("What will you build similar barracks to

those for?" was the simple question put to the contractors when asked to tender); and *thirdly*, I carried on the works here with absolutely free labour, as described in Chapters V. and VIII., and the fame of my treatment of the natives had gone before me; they flocked to my standard as they had done at Ahmednugger and at Neemuch.

I found great difficulty in getting tiles for the buildings, and, as it seemed desirable that thatch should be replaced by tiles, as far as possible, I selected a suitable piece of ground, where the clay was of proper consistency, and started a brick and tile work of our own, burning the tiles with the stable litter collected from the Artillery and Cavalry, as there was nothing else to be got. Shortly after this, I had an order to design and estimate for two churches for Nusserabad and Neemuch, which, after some study, I did; then for a set of six cells for European soldiers (Provost Prison) for Nusserabad; then for a very large radiating gaol to be built at Ajmeer for 1000 native prisoners, which I myself carried out nearly to the finish. Also a new set of lines for a native regiment at Ajmeer; some improvements at Neemuch, including a water supply for the Camp, and other things. Numbers of other smaller erections had to be built and altered in the different cantonments. There were eight powder magazines, to all of which I had to put lightning conductors. This was a most interesting study; I sent to England for the newest and best books on the subject, and read them up first. Neither the lightning conductor, nor the platinum points which used to be put to them, "attract" lightning as so many think, but when the electric fluid carried in the clouds comes in contact with the copper conductor, down it comes to earth. I arranged to alter the roofs of some of the powder magazines, making them lighter, and the side walls stronger, for someone had bethought himself at that time that when gunpowder exploded it acted on the "line of the least resistance" only, and so, if an explosion did take place, it was better the roof should be blown off and the force expended up in the air, while the sides stood firm and protected things that were round about them. There was no dynamite or other explosive (which act differently) in those days.

ONE OF MY GREATEST LOSSES.

My Scientific Library, which was a most excellent one, was unfortunately lost eventually, with everything I valued and had collected during the twelve years I served in India. Plans,

drawings, diaries, presents from the native Rajahs and others, clothes, &c., my faithful battery of three guns and rifles, heads and horns, animals skins *ad infinitum*, a considerable quantity of Bombay carved black wood furniture, worth about £120, intended as a present for my mother, and all my belongings, except one or two little things (among which was the silver "Gurguree" now in the drawing-room) which I had stuffed into one of my portmanteaux when starting overland for home—all these went to the bottom of the sea in the vessel that was bringing my treasures home. It was wrecked on the French coast, almost within sight of Dover Citadel, where afterwards I was quartered with my regiment.

MY DUTIES CONTINUED.

In addition to Nusserabad, Neemuch, Ajmeer, Kherwara, and Erinpoora, I had three other British Cantonments to superintend continually and visit, as well as to proceed with any of the Forces in the field which might require my services; and to aid me I had one European overseer, two or three native ditto, in all about ten clerks, and the same number of draughtsmen, with any number of labourers and artisans required. My travelling, as I have stated before, exceeded 800 miles a-month, and my expenditure on the public account exceeded 3 lakhs of rupees in each of the years I was in charge, which is equal to £30,000 a-year.

THE 83rd REGIMENT QUARTERED AT NUSSERABAD.

It was pleasant for me having my own Regiment quartered with me, as I was thus enabled to dine at mess whenever I chose, and, as a matter of course, I had several personal and much-valued friends amongst the officers, though my time was too fully occupied to see much of them. Many of the older officers were not best pleased at my being absent from Regimental duty, which, they declared, fell very hard upon them, and some, perhaps, were a little jealous of my success, for which I was sorry.

A VISIT FROM THE C.O. OF THE 83rd REGIMENT.

One fine day Colonel S——, who commanded the Regiment, came to my bungalow and asked to see me. He was ushered into the office, and seated beside me on the Chair of State, on which I received notable native celebrities and Rajahs. He was not looking his pleasantest, but I received him cheerfully, especially as we had always been very good friends. He was an extremely well educated, but a most cynical man. Men of this sort may

make what they consider clever remarks, and so please themselves and make others smile, but I would recommend all such to take care who hears them, for no people in the world make so many bitter enemies as cynical men. Colonel S—— never "tried it on" on me, and it is not likely I should have minded him much if he had, for in other respects he was one of the pleasantest men to talk to for an hour or so quietly that I ever associated with, and we were friends to the last. For this I cannot, however, take much credit to myself. It so happened that, when he rejoined from England, after his accident, his sick leave, and his Depôt tour, the Regiment was divided, with one wing in Bombay, which he joined, and the other in Deesa, with which I was, and, before they came together again, I was appointed to the Staff, and practically never rejoined Headquarters until the Regiment reached Dover. When I joined at Fermoy in '48 there was a feud between the 73rd and 83rd Regiments of a very bitter kind; scarcely a night passed without some outrage amongst the soldiers. Both Regiments were deprived of their side-arms (bayonets), but they then tried to brain each other with their breast-plates or waist-belts, and the night after I joined there was a terrible tragedy. The three centre officers' quarters in the barracks had areas, and the kitchens downstairs looked into them. In the morning, when the servants came in and began brushing their masters' clothes, they heard someone moaning. Looking out, they saw a figure rolled in a greatcoat lying at the bottom of the area on the flags, and, on going down and getting him out, it was found to be Captain S——. He had been thrown over the railings the night before, it was thought, by some privates of one of the Regiments, and was quite insensible. He was very much hurt, and was sent home on a year's sick leave, and did not come out to rejoin his Regiment in India for three or four years, he having in the meantime had a tour of the Depôt at Chatham; and, when he did so, I was away on the Staff. It was said of him that he was a man of extraordinary memory, and, like Macaulay, the historian, could repeat the first column of the *Times* newspaper verbatim, after having read it over only once; but after this fall he lost this power, and never again regained it rightly.

WHAT COLONEL S—— SAID.

After looking rather diffidently round the room, which he had never been in before—at plans, maps, bills, drawing instruments, and many other contrivances in the way of tools, which filled

it, also at the clerks, draughtsmen, &c., he produced from his pocket a slip of paper, on which were written the names of the officers he had at Headquarters. Then he said, "Captain Sprot, I have come to appeal to your feeling—to your *esprit de corps*—to give up your appointment and rejoin your Regiment. I have only one Captain with the Regiment; there are six young Ensigns, mere boys, each in command of a Company, and the remaining Companies are all in the hands of very young Lieutenants. How can a Regiment go on properly on field service with such a paucity of officers? I have three or four times applied for your services, but have always been refused. It is the more provoking, as you are the only officer in the Queen's army so employed by John Company; it is very discreditable, and I hope you will listen to my appeal." My reply was quite readily given—"If," I said, "the Government of Bombay, as you tell me, has declined to allow me to return to Regimental duty when, under these circumstances, you ask them, what is to be expected were I to ask? I may tell you for a certainty, because they have told me so, that there is no one in the Presidencies who is capable of taking my place here. Look round this room, ride round the cantonment, and think if you could find a man capable of doing what you see me doing. And look at the importance of what is being done; consider it well, and remember I have seven other cantonments all similarly dependent on me, some of them 200 or 300 miles away. Who is there you can suggest to do the work if I am removed? No, Colonel, however willing I may be to rejoin you, it cannot be done. Be careful you do not worry the authorities too much, or they may order your Regiment out of the theatre of war as inefficient on your own showing, and I should be sorry to see that." He remained silent for a few minutes, and then said, "Well, Sprot, perhaps they are right, let us say no more about it," and, shaking hands, he left my office a wiser man.

THE INDIAN STAFF CORPS.

The fact is, Colonels hated their officers being taken from them at any time for any purpose whatever, desirable or undesirable, and there was a great deal of jealousy amongst them all. This led to the formation of the "Staff Corps," an alteration which was not, in my opinion, any improvement. Before that the most suitable man could be selected for the purpose required from amongst all the others, and, after the necessity was over, he could return to his military service, none the worse, but greatly

more useful for what he had learned. The officers who agitated have gained nothing by their clamour, because, as soon as the Staff Corps was formed, the cadre of all Regiments were heavily reduced in number. When a Regiment went to India from home, the officers were augmented by some sixteen or twenty Lieutenants, but, as soon as the Staff Corps was created, and "seconding" came into use, all augmentation ceased.

COLONEL S—— AGAIN.

The 83rd did not return from their Indian service for two years after I was invalided home, but, when they did, they were still commanded by Colonel S——, and they came to the Dover Shaft Barracks. When they landed, the officers at the Depôt, of whom I was one, were ordered to join them, and, a night or two after I got there, Colonel S—— asked me after mess to come to his room and have a cigar. Neither of us smoked, but we had a nice talk, and, in course of conversation, he said, "I am glad you have come to join us; you are the only friend I have in the Regiment, and I hope you will remain so and stop with us, for I can safely say," quoting the well known lines, "'I have no friends and but few acquaintances, and those few dislike me.' I don't know why they should all dislike me—I do them no harm, but I must admit that 'my bark is worse than my bite.'" It was perfectly true. I never felt more for a man than for him. Shortly after the Regiment got home he arranged to sell out and leave, and his papers had actually gone in, when one day he died of apoplexy on a sofa in the morning-room of the Junior United Service Club, to which we both belonged. Poor fellow, his cynical and sarcastic remarks did it all. When I proposed, at a Mess Meeting shortly after, that the officers should spend £10 on a brass memorial tablet to his memory, to be erected in his parish church at home, the feeling was so strong it was denied him; as far as my memory serves me, not one voice was in favour of my proposal. "De mortuis nil nisi bonum."

A VISIT TO JEYPOOR.

THE MARBLE PALACE. A BOAR SHOOT.

One day, while making one of my numerous expeditions, I came to Jeypoor, the capital of the State of the same name, and the home of the Rajah. Outside the walls, in a suitable place, I pitched my camp, and before long the messengers of the Rajah came out with abundance of trays of sweetmeats, also sugar cane,

chickens, &c., &c., as offerings of friendship. Next morning I thought I would take a look round, and was recommended to follow a path down to a gorge in some small hills, about a mile and a-half from the city. When I came to the gorge, I found I had got to the Summer Palace of the Rajah, built entirely of white marble, with its back against the rock, and looking over a vast, boundless plain. It was a large, rather open building, supported on numerous pillars most beautifully carved, and well worth a visit, though Jeypoor lies a good bit off the main road between Nusserabad and Neemuch. The floors were all white marble slabs, and there was one very pretty contrivance most suitable for hot weather; through all the rooms ran a little ditch cut in the white marble, about 6 inches deep, and 12 to 18 inches wide, the bottom of which was carved (and pretty deeply cut) like fish backs, one overlapping the other like slates, so that, when the water, which was very clear, was turned on, the ripple thus caused made it sparkle beyond all conception. The building was most remarkable and very pretty. After having made my inspection, I went off home to my tent for the daytime, and in the afternoon the Rajah paid me a visit. I had a full hour's conversation with him on many subjects, in all of which he took more or less interest, and, before leaving, he invited me to a shoot of wild boars and pigs, to take place in his preserves the following day.

A WILD BOAR SHOOT.

On the following afternoon we met on the east side of the city, at the head of the walk I had taken the previous day which led me to the Summer Palace; in fact, as I was afterwards informed, in the pleasure grounds of His Majesty. He had a large retinue, and numbers of guns and rifles, and with pomp and ceremony we all proceeded about half-a-mile down the walk, when a halt was called. The bulk of the dependents were sent back, but a chosen few remained with us, and we struck off into the green jungle, or, a better name for it under the circumstances would be the "shrubbery." We had only gone a very few yards when, in front of us, in a more open space, stood a pretty little miniature loop-holed castle of grey stone, with battlements and a tower. It was surrounded by a glacis of well-cut grass, sloping away on all sides for 50 or 60 yards, where it joined the jungle. We all walked in through the miniature archway that formed the entrance, and then found the place was simply a hollow shell—no roof. Our guns were all ranged round the wall with the loop-holes,

and, after a few minutes' talk, one of the men went up the winding staircase to the top of the tower. When fairly at the top, this man commenced in the usual monotonous manner to shout that word, so common and so well-known through all India, "Au, au, au"—"Come, come, come;" which might appropriately have been translated into the words of our well-known nursery ditty, "Come, little chickabiddies, come and be killed." All the time he shouted, the man threw down from the tower's top handfuls of "gram" or "cheuna" on to the glacis below. It was not very long before a little porker poked out his nose, and began to feed on the grassy expanse before us; then came another and another, followed by a couple of old tuskers; then a sow appeared and her "sounder" of young ones, and then another motherly old creature with quite a herd of little "squeakers;" and, in less than half-an-hour from our entering the "castle," the open ground was literally covered with *tame* wild pigs of sorts. "Luggow," said the Rajah to me, "luggow, sahib, luggow!" But for the life of me I could not bring myself (then, so to speak, a chivalrous boy) to shoot straight into these poor brutes from behind my screen, all ranged in dozens within half a gun-shot before me. "Maff karo," I said, "maff karo" (forgive me), Rajah, i mun, I cannot shoot. Then said my royal friend, "Can't you? I can, here goes!" And, taking up his rifle, he began, and was followed by the other guests; but, when the melée was at its height, I too took up my rifle and joined in the din. In a short time all the pigs that could run away did run away, and then we walked out of the castle to look at the slaughtered. Some of the servants pursued the wounded, and some carried the dead to the fringe of the walk, where, after some time, they were all laid out and ranged according to size, some five and-twenty or thirty in number. Again I had to beg pardon when my friend said, "Which will you take, and how many will you have?" All my servants were Mahommedans, and I would not offend their prejudices by eating pig myself. So we left the coolies to bring home the "game," walked to the palace, and there I took leave of my nice friend the Rajah, to proceed next morning to Headquarters at Nusserabad.

A FAMOUS FAIR, AND A REMARKABLE LAKE.

Some distance north of Ajmeer is annually held a very large fair, where hundreds and hundreds of people gather from all parts of Asia. I would liken it to that of Nijni Novgorod, to

the east of Moscow, which most of us have heard of, and which I missed seeing only by making a mistake in the Russian dates, for I got as far as Moscow once with the intention of going there, but found I had arrived too early, and my leave would have expired before I could go there and get back to England if I waited for time. The two fairs are very much the same kind of thing—one being for the use of Western, and the other Eastern Asia. The name of the town (almost village) is Pohkar, and it is built on the edge of a large lake. I was sent to this place because the inhabitants had complained that the lake's high-water level was rising each year higher and higher, and flooding annually worse and worse all the houses which were built on its edge. The matter was not one that need be hurried, so I thought I would wait a few weeks, until it came to the time of the Great Fair, and having arranged this in my mind, when the time arrived I started away, and managed, so to speak, to "kill two birds with one stone."

On the way I stopped at Ajmeer, and did such business as I had there, and, amongst other things, I made a critical examination of "Taraghur," as it seemed to me that we might, by having a sanatorium built on the top, have a place quite near the camp at Nusserabad where invalid soldiers could be sent, instead of having the much greater cost of transporting them to Bombay, and perhaps home, or even to Mount Aboo; and, moreover, men, whose ailments were more trifling, could be sent up there, whereas now they had their illness considerably prolonged by remaining stewing in the plains below in the hot weather. So I brought this idea of mine to the notice of the Bombay Government, and was much gratified just before leaving India to hear that the Government quite approved what was suggested, and had sanctioned the proposal being carried out.

At last I arrived at Pohkar, and had my tents pitched on a sandy spot much like the rest, which turned out to be pretty nearly in the middle of the Fair, and not altogether pleasant. However, I had no occasion to remain there very long; one day satisfied me as to the assembled multitude and their merchandise, which consisted of a great variety of different things, but for the most part camels. I bought several little odds and ends as keepsakes and presents; one was a beautiful piece of deep brown sable fur, which I gave to our Regimental doctor, Touch, very acceptable in the cold winter weather we were having; also some curious arms, fans, ivory articles, &c., and last, but perhaps not least, some Otto of Rose. This Otto of Rose (called in Persian

"Roomee," meaning Turkish) is of great value, and is sold for its weight in gold. The merchant puts a small primitive looking greenish bottle into the scale, which he balances with a little sand or dust from the ground, and then the buyer, myself in this instance, has only to put down gold "mohurs" on the one side while the "Schrooff" pours the Otto into the bottle till it balances the gold. I had a gold mohur's worth, which eventually I brought home to England, and it was sufficient to scent a drawer in my military chest for twenty or thirty years; indeed, I think there is a slight smell of it still remaining.

THE LAKE.

On examining the lake at Pohkar, I first found that all the houses on the lower side of the street, which for some distance followed the shore, were deserted, as the lower storeys were completely under water, and that they could be of no further use to their owners if some means were not found of reducing the level of the water very considerably and permanently. I then walked right round, and was very much surprised to find that, although two large rivers, larger than the Ale at Riddell, ran into the lake, there was no outlet to be found anywhere, and it seemed to me that, the soil being sand, the water which ran in found its way out underground by percolating through this sand, something in the way that the "mole" river near Dorking in Surrey disappears under ground for some distance. There would, however, be no difficulty in making an outlet, by digging a trench of sufficient width some 20 or 30 feet deep for a distance of about a quarter-of-a-mile, and this I reported to my Government could be easily and cheaply managed. But it was to me a most singular thing to find a large body of water as described, with two very large rivers running into it and no outlet at all. After making this cursory survey, I returned to Headquarters at Nusserabad.

I CAUGHT A NASTY COLD.

About this time I had to go out on some duty, the object of which I cannot now remember, to a place 12 or 15 miles from camp, and took up my abode for a few days in the Travellers' Bungalow there. In front of it was a large reservoir, or tank as they are called in India, one of the many which had been made by the Resident of Merwara, who had made himself famous for the number of tanks and irrigation works he had constructed in that State, about which works there is interesting and instructive reading in "Tod's Rajpootana."

This tank was covered with wild fowl, and I had some excellent sport. It was the only place in which I ever saw pelicans in abundance. I shot one, and made his feathery breast into a covering for my solar hat, and owing to its lightness and fluffiness I never had anything so nice before. But here I caught a very bad cold, and with it I got attacks of spasmodic asthma, which always came on between 12 and 1 in the middle of the night, lasting an hour or two, when it disappeared for twenty-four hours, and in the daytime I had not a sign of it. At first it woke me, and I had to sit up till it was over, then it got worse, and I had to stand up while the spasm lasted. Of course, I applied to the doctors, but in the daytime when they examined my chest and throat there was nothing abnormal. They made me put mustard poultices on, and gave me liniment to rub my chest with, but still the thing lingered and got worse.

THAT OTHER DUST STORM.

I had to commence the new gaol at Ajmeer at this time, so started off my servants, camels, and kit one day for a week's absence there, myself following on horseback later in the day. Just on the Nusserabad side of the little Pass, which lies about half-way, I overtook my kit and passed it as usual, riding on to my destination. The afternoon was dark, lowering, and thundery, resembling very much the day of the dust storm which I described in Chapter XI.; and sure enough, before I had got many miles further, a similar storm came on, with its accompaniment of rumbling thunder and blackness, and it was not long before I was enveloped in darkness. Dressed only in thin kharki, I was soon absolutely exposed, without a chance of an atom of shelter for 5 or 6 miles, to the heaviest rain I ever remember, so that when I reached the Travellers' Bungalow outside Ajmeer my clothes were as wet as if I had been ducked in the river. Indeed, I was thankful—most thankful—to get under shelter, but what then? The only furniture in the room was an empty bedstead and two chairs. What could I do? There was not a house nor a creature within reach, except a native caretaker, and he could give me no help. There was no fireplace in the room, nor any fuel if there had been, so there was no alternative but to wait in this dreadful state, cold and shivering, the arrival of my camels with my kit. I walked up and down the room, endeavouring to keep myself warm by the exercise, but in vain. Eight o'clock came—nine, ten, eleven, and twelve—still no signs of dry clothes; it was daylight next morning before they arrived,

and all this time I was fasting. My servants had taken shelter in the small village at the mouth of the Pass, and remained there till the storm was over. I got some tea and something to eat when they arrived, and, what was more to the point, I got into bed, after changing my clothes, with the only blanket I had (a blue-checked one, which is now downstairs in the cupboard in the Entrance Hall). I soon became as warm as a toast, and slept till 3 o'clock in the afternoon, but no one will be surprised to hear that I developed one of the worst colds I ever contracted in all my life.

The next day, after going round the works, I thought it better to return to camp, so moved off in the afternoon of the following day, arriving at home in time for dinner, which I had at the Mess of the 20th Bombay N.I., not far from my own bungalow; and that day, for the first time in my life, I found out what it was to be tired. Still, notwithstanding the fatigue, there was no sleep for me; at midnight, on came my asthma with redoubled vigour. I had to stand up, leaning against my chest of drawers, to enable me to breathe, and the noise of my breathing might have been heard 100 yards down the road. Well I remember that night starting off then and there in my pyjamas and slippers a quarter-of-a-mile down the main road to the doctor. "Now, old fellow," I said, "I have one of these attacks I told you of, and have come to let you see and hear it; if you can't cure me, you know I will surely die of it some of these days." He got up, woke his servant, and sent him off to the hospital for a nitrate of silver solution, which he used with a brush down my throat, giving me much relief, so that in another half-hour I got off to my bed and was comfortable. But he was not satisfied with what he had done; he called in both the Artillery and Cavalry doctors, and next morning they put me to bed and had a most thorough examination, which resulted in the following treatment. They blistered my throat with croton oil; "cupped" me on both breasts, taking away 8 oz. of blood; put 24 leeches over the region of my liver; and then on my chest, over the lancet wounds, put a large fly blister. Not bad work for one day. Next morning they came again; too tender in front to be tinkered at, they turned me over on my face and stethoscoped me all round there, shaking their heads, they put 48 leeches between my shoulder-blades, and, when they were taken off, a wide fly blister from well up the nape of my neck to below my waist behind, and again rubbed in the croton oil round my neck and throat. I could hardly move a finger without calling out with pain, and

to this day I bear the marks of this severe treatment over my body. But they pulled me through. After this I had for a time to take the greatest care of myself; one of the doctors came every day to see me for more than a month; each night I had alternately a large mustard plaster or my chest and back rubbed with a liniment, and I was given stramonium to smoke occasionally for the asthma, as well as continuing the nitrate of silver solution nightly to my throat. Application was then made to send me home on medical certificate. During the whole of the time I carried on my duties unceasingly. Except on the two days of the blistering, all my native clerks came one by one to my room, where they sat on the floor and read my letters, while I dictated the replies; and before ten days were over I was carried up in a palanquin to Ajmeer to look over the works there, and I was proud to say that, through the blessing of God and a strong constitution, I had been able to go through that three years of trying work during the Mutiny, with only these two days of absence from duty from any cause whatever. But my application for leave came back from Bombay ungranted. They could not in all the Presidency find a man capable of carrying on my duty. "Could I not manage to go on through the cold weather? They would take it as the greatest favour if I could remain a little longer, and, in the meantime, they would do their best to find someone to relieve me." So I said, "Yes, I am better now, I will try." And I did remain during the cold weather.

HOW I SETTLED TWO ATTEMPTS AT THEFT.

As I got stronger I went on with my work as usual, but of course had to be more careful than before, and I did not go quite such long journeys, and kept more at my headquarters. I was always a careful, tidy man, and each night when I went to bed, whether in camp or the jungle, I invariably folded my clothes carefully, and placed them near my bed-head on a chair or a stone. I will also remind my readers that, always a light sleeper, the slightest noise or even movement woke me. Well, one bright moonlight night I had turned into bed at midnight as usual, for in general I took so much interest in my work that I would without doubt have sat up all night, had I not made it a rule to leave off at 12 o'clock, and turn in, whatever I was doing; and I had been asleep possibly two or three hours, when I awoke conscious that someone was in my room. One of the doors of my bedroom opened into the main part of the house, and the other into the

Zunana Khana, which had no door opening out of it to the outside. Presently I saw a figure at the doorway coming stealthily up the two steps leading to my room. My hand slipped under the pillow, and laid hold of the revolver—the movement was enough to frighten the thief—he snatched up my clothes and ran, I after him. When I got out into the moonlight the fellow was scrambling up over the wall at the corner, where he had placed a sleeper on end to assist him, but I had just time to fire, and though I did not succeed in dropping my man, I made him drop my clothes.

The other Case.

My readers will remember the riding camel I purchased at Deesa when coming up country; well, I had him still, and very useful he was. He was always picketed on the grass plot opposite my front door, under the eye of the sentry belonging to the guard over the Treasure Tumbrel. There he was fed, and there he had safely remained for some eighteen months or more, and as for suspecting that Bheels would come there, right into the middle of the cantonment, and steal him, such a thing never entered anyone's head. But one fine morning, when it came to the hour of my rising, which was always from 4-30 to 5 A.M., the Corporal came and knocked at my door, a Private being with him, and they welcomed me with the information that the camel had been stolen under the sentry's eyes, the thief having first put on the saddle that was in the veranda, cut the cord, and then, jumping on the animal, hustled him out of the compound before the sentry could give the alarm, or recover from his surprise. Cautioning the sentry not to allow anyone to walk where the camel's footmarks were, I went off to the native Bazaar, and looked up the head of the Camel Police. He returned with me, bringing three of his men, who carefully examined the footmarks. They were then despatched along the three main roads, each taking one, to search, and I went about my day's work as usual. Time passed, and by evening two of the men had returned unsuccessful, but the third was not back. On the succeeding evening he arrived; I saw him come up to the door, the "puggi" was riding my camel in the front seat, and the thief was bound and tied to the back seat. The camel was handed over to me, saddle and all, and the prisoner was taken off to the Bazaar Police Office. The three "puggis" had done good work, and deserved the good round tip which I gave them. No native attempted to rob me again.

OFF DOWN TO BOMBAY.

The cold weather was practically over, and the days were becoming hot; March and its warm dry weather had already passed; it was now April, and in May the monsoon would break. After that streams are in flood, and roads become impassable. It was clear then that if a move was to take place it must be now or not till next year. I much regretted leaving my well-paid and most pleasant appointment, still here was I with asthma and bronchitis, that might get worse or become permanent; my parents, to whose fine estate I was heir, were longing for my return—I had a stake in England which I had not in my temporary Indian home; my Regiment, too, would, under any circumstances, be off home in a year or so, and I would have to go with it. Already it had been ordered to the coast, which is always a preliminary to departure, and that part of it at Nusserabad was to march next month to Bombay. I would march with it, go home, and take the best medical advice to be found when I got there. But how about being relieved? Well, I had done my duty by remaining thus long; they must find someone at Headquarters, but I must go. So, having made up my mind, I took myself off to the Officer Commanding the Brigade, to see what he would do for me. "Certainly, my dear fellow," he said, "you must go home; here is the medical certificate, and I will at once put Captain ——, as you propose, in orders, to take over the treasure, books, papers, &c., of your office, and when that is done you can leave as soon as you like." That was the end of my service in India. I marched down to Bombay, partly along with my regiment, but of course independent of them, and reached that island town in due course early in May 1860.

A CASE OF CHOLERA.

I don't remember that anything particular happened on the way down country until I came to Surat. There I went into the Travellers' Bungalow for the night—the small steamer that plied weekly between this town and Bombay would sail on the following afternoon. In the room opposite me I observed there was a young man who was going up country, and was told he was to dine with a friend on board one of the vessels in harbour that evening. I had my own dinner at home, strolled about on the "Bunder," and went to bed early. In the middle of the night I was wakened by a considerable noise from the direction of the young man's room on the other side of the passage, but, knowing he

had been out dining with friends in the harbour, and that orgies were not uncommon in those days in such places, I merely grumbled at being disturbed, turned over, and went to sleep again till the morning. When daylight began to break my servant arrived with the "chota haziri" (tea and bread and butter), and I casually said to him, "That gentleman seems to have had a fine drink in the harbour last night, for he woke me in the middle of the night, being very sick; it's a pity young men cannot avoid taking too much on these occasions." "No, sahib," he said, lowering his voice almost to a whisper, and looking over his shoulder as if he expected to see the devil behind him, "he has got *the awful complaint.*" "What," I said, "do you mean to say he has cholera?" "Ah, sahib." I got up instantly, finished my "little breakfast" whilst dressing, and went straight in to see what could be done for the poor lad. There he lay on the bungalow charpoy's cane bottom, a pillow under his head, but no bedding or blankets, crumpled up with cramp, his eyes glassy, and his body as cold as ice, and with all the symptoms of cholera. It was the only case I had ever seen in my twelve years in India, but I had heard it much talked of, and had read about it, so was prepared to deal with it. "What is the matter, my boy?" I said, in quite a cheerful, happy voice, "have you got cholera?" "Yes, sir," he said, "but it is all over with me, and I am quite resigned." "Nonsense, young fellow, you know nothing about it, but you have just got the right man to look after you—I know all about it; you do as I tell you, and I'll get you through. Get up if you can, and rub yourself, and I will soon be back." So saying, I went out and got two coolies, whom I set to work one on each side to rub him hard; then, going off to my room, I ferreted out of a corner of my old bullock trunk a box of cholera pills I had been carrying about ever since I left Bombay at the beginning of the Mutiny, and gave him a couple to take straight off, according to the directions on the box. Having been out for an hour looking about me, I returned to my patient, whom I found better, but still low-spirited. I had a small box of half-a-dozen pints of champagne, which I habitually carried about with me when travelling, and this I knocked open, and, taking one of the bottles to him, made him drink half of it, and, half-an-hour after, followed it up with the other half. This cheered him up a good deal, and, before I left in the evening, he had practically recovered, though the after relapse was much to be dreaded. There were no railways and very few doctors in those days, so, giving him and his servants

all the instructions I could think of, I left him the remains of the case of champagne and the box of pills, and, saying good-bye, started off for Bombay in a shower of thanks and blessings from the poor boy. I never for certain heard whether he quite recovered or not, but I was told he had left Surat and gone on his way, so presume he got over his attack completely.

ARRIVAL AT BOMBAY.

On reaching Bombay I was given a bungalow at Colharbour until the departure of the P. & O. steamer for England at the end of May, and there I brought myself to a temporary anchor. There were a good many things to be done before leaving: I had to sell my horses, and that I managed very well. For my grey Arab, "Perinda," I got exactly what I had given for him on the Bunder here nine years before as a three-year old, out of the boat from the Persian Gulf; and, for my bay Nepalus mare, just what I bought her for four years ago. This was always the way; all through my life I can scarcely ever remember, under any circumstances, losing money on a horse. Of course, I never did anything in the horse-dealing way, and I know no instance of any horse that was not the better for my having ridden him a year or two, or even much more. Then I had my furniture and kit to sell or give away, and I bought a quantity of carved black wood as a present for my mother, which, however, never reached her. After that I had to leave my P.P.C. on those who had befriended me, and thank them for their kindness, and, indeed, make their acquaintance in most instances, for I had never seen most of them. First I left my cards at Government House, and at the same time called on the Military Secretary, and thanked him for allowing me to remain so long away from my Regiment under very trying circumstances. He was most pleasant, and, in parting, offered me, if I chose to return, command of a Regiment of Gujerat Horse if I cared for it, saying, however, I would have to begin with six months as Adjutant. My next day's calling took me to the Secretariat, to see my great friend Mr H——, Secretary to Government in the Public Works Department. I had never seen him before. We had a long talk, in which he said he need not assure me that, if I returned to Bombay, I should, immediately on landing, have the best appointment on the D.P.W. that was vacant, and a better afterwards if there was one. In saying good-bye, he told me that Mr ——, Secretary in the Political Department, would like to see me, and he then

himself took me over to his office and introduced me. This gentleman went at once to the point. "I am very glad to have met you. Will you be returning at the expiration of your year's sick-leave? Would you like to come into the Political Department when you return?" Now, in my heart of hearts, there was nothing in the world I should have preferred to that. A most excellent engineer on the Public Works I could say without vanity I had unquestionably proved myself to be, but, in the Diplomatic Service in India, with my knowledge of so many nationalities, castes, and religions, and so great an insight as I had gained in my last few years' experience, and the number of Eastern languages I could speak, or, at least, understand, I felt perfectly confident that, if I had excelled in the first case, I was much surer still of success in the second, and this I told my friend. "That is just, Captain Sprot, the opinion we have formed of you in this office. We have a Native State in the north, where the Resident wishes to retire some day before long, and we would like you to take his place. There is but one drawback to your accepting it, and that is, you would have to serve for six months as Assistant on ₹500 a-month (£600 a-year), so that you might learn something about details of the work, but, after that, your salary will be the 'four threes,' ₹3333, which means £4000 a-year." All this was indeed a surprise, and when, after thanking him for the confidence he reposed in me, I left that office door, it was with the full intention of returning to India as soon as ever my medical officer would permit me, at the expiration of my leave. My other friends were soon disposed of—very few were left; and I had little more to do than while away the few days that remained before the vessel sailed, which was on the Queen's Birthday, 1860.

THE VOYAGE HOME.

Little more remains to be told of my Indian career. On the vessel I found my cousin, Mrs Shewell of Cheltenham, and her baby, which added to the pleasure of the voyage. We landed at Aden for a few hours, and I went all round the place. Then we sailed up the Red Sea to Suez, landed there, and went by the sweet water canal to Cairo; stayed a few days at that beautiful city, and on by railway to Alexandria, where we remained at least a week waiting for the Marseilles steamer. When it came, we continued our voyage *via* Malta, spending one evening there in visiting the opera, the restaurants, &c.; we had a day and a night at Marseilles, then on to Paris, Boulogne, Folkestone, Charing Cross, London—the town of my birth.

OFF TO BRIGHTON.

After a night's rest, putting on all my old Indian Sunday best clothes, which was all I had, I started off to Brighton, where my father, mother, and brother Edward were staying in lodgings, just opposite the Chain Pier, where for many years it was their habit to go, so that my mother should be for a month annually with her old mother. I went down by rail in the middle of the day, arriving between 3 and 4. They were out, so I proposed to sit down and wait in the drawing-room on the ground floor, with its large bow window opening to the sea. Then my mind went back to the time when I left them twelve years ago—a thin little white-haired, smooth-faced lad; now I was a man of thirty, brown and swarthy, with a full flowing beard nearly down to my waist, and a moustache so long that the ends more than met at the back of my neck, where I used to try and tie them. "Would they know me, I wondered?" I had not written to say I was coming home. And so ran my thoughts, when, after waiting an hour, or nearly so, they walked in at the gate, and, seeing a stranger standing by the fire-place, they all three looked in, and had a good stare at me, feeling rather indignant that such a disreputable-looking fellow should have been allowed into their sitting-room. My father came in first and asked me who I was and what was my business, while my mother and young brother looked over his shoulder. Not one of them knew me. It was very amusing, particularly as they began to get quite angry, so at last I thought it best to say, "The mail is in from India, and I am your prodigal son."

"ALL'S WELL THAT ENDS WELL."

APPENDIX.

APPENDIX I.

1849 to 1860.

An Abstract of the Services in India of Lt.-Gen. Sprot, when there quartered from 1849 to 1860, as Lieutenant and as Captain during the Mutiny.

This Abstract was printed as a Testimonial when applying for the command of the 91st Argyllshire Highlanders, now 1st Battalion Argyll & Sutherland Highlanders, in 1868.

ENSIGN SPROT entered the Army in September 1848, and has now been in the service for twenty years.

On the 16th March 1849 he embarked with his regiment for India, and returned to England on the 20th June 1860, having been abroad nearly twelve years.

After four years service in Scinde and Goojerat, he obtained permission in the summer of 1855, to attend the Central Military College at Poona (founded by Lord Frederick Fitzclarence) for a term of six months.

At the expiration, however, of four months (having during that time always held the first place at the College), he was offered and accepted an appointment in the Public Works Department of the Bombay Presidency. The appointment was dated Bombay Castle, 28th September 1855, and signed W. Hart, Secretary to Government. On leaving the College, he received a certificate of "Proficiency in Surveying and Levelling with all instruments, in Mapping, Plotting, and Drawing, in Algebra, Geometry, Trigonometry, and Theoretical Mathematics generally." He afterwards received one from the same place for "Thorough acquaintance with Field Fortification, including the tracing and practical construction of works in the field," and another for a "Thorough acquaintance with Hydraulics."

On the 16th August of the same year, he received from Lieut.-Colonel Walter Scott, Superintending Engineer of the Central Province, a certificate having reference to his competency "to survey roads and countries, to keep a field book, and to protract and map, giving the levels of the country generally," and on the

17th of the following month, he received another from the same officer regarding his being "able to answer all queries on the principles upon which materials are prepared and works executed."

After having been employed for some months on works of minor consequence, Lieut. Sprot was sent to the Ahmednuggar Collectorate in June 1856, to construct a line of road through a famine district; and on the 4th September of that year, he received a letter of thanks from the Collector, Mr Fraser Tytler, for "the very valuable and efficient service rendered to the districts of this Zillah (Ahmednuggar) by the work on which he had been employed." The 3rd and 4th paragraphs of this letter runs as follows:—"You commenced it under every disadvantage, and with only a trifling emergent grant; nevertheless, in four and a-half months you completed somewhat more than 26 miles, over nearly the worst country we have." "I have twice visited the new line, it seems to me an excellent one, and I am glad to find myself borne out in this opinion by Colonel Scott" (Chief Engineer). In his letter to the Secretary to Government, dated 4th July 1856, Mr Tytler, speaking of the above-mentioned road, says "Lieut. Sprot has at a small outlay, and in an *incredibly short* space of time, done nearly 30 miles of this line."

The expenditure of 130,265 rupees on the extension of this line of road was shortly afterwards applied for, and the following is an extract from a resolution of Government, dated Bombay Castle, 10th October 1856. The resolution authorises the expenditure, and "The Right Hon. The Governor in Council (Lord Elphinstone) is anxious that the execution of so much of it as can be undertaken by Lieut. Sprot should be entrusted to him." At the end of January 1857 he was placed in charge of, and ordered to construct, a line of 26 miles of raised roadway, with bridges and culverts, completely metalled and gravelled, from Nuggar to the Godavery at Toka. This he finished in little more than four months, at a cost *one quarter* less than the estimated price.

The Central India Field Force passed over this road in June 1857, and, at this time, the public works throughout India being suspended, Lieut. Sprot was ordered to rejoin his regiment. On his leaving Ahmednuggar, the Executive Engineer of that place handed him a testimonial to the effect that he "had every reason to be pleased with *the zeal, intelligence, and attention to his work* exhibited by him," as well as with "his aptitude for design and taste for his adopted profession."

Being delayed at Poona during the rainy season, Lieut. Sprot

took advantage of the leisure afforded him to qualify himself for the final examination for permanent employ in the Public Works Department of the Presidency. The examination, which comprised every subject connected with engineering, commenced on the 14th August, and lasted for twenty-one days. The minimum number of marks required were 1170. Of seven candidates (mostly professional engineers) Lieut. Sprot *alone* passed, obtaining 1412¼ marks. Government resolution of the 5th September 1857 takes notice that "Lieut. Sprot, who has shown himself a very useful officer in the Public Works Department, has satisfactorily passed his examination, and that, although present circumstances (the mutinies) prevent his employment in the *Public Works Department*, Government will be glad to avail themselves of *any opportunity* of employing him hereafter."

When passing through Bombay in September, Lieut. Sprot was offered two appointments—the Adjutancy of a regiment of Irregular Horse in Goojerat, which, in consequence of his seniority as a subaltern, he respectfully declined; and afterwards the Assistant Political Agency in the Rewa Kanta. This he accepted, but was unable to take up the appointment, as the Mutiny having reached its height, the Commander-in-Chief wished him to join his corps in Central India.

On reaching his regiment at Deesa in October, he was sent with a company to Mount Aboo, but subsequently joining the Rajpootana Field Force under Colonel (Brigadier) Trydell, he was appointed by him Brigade-Major, subject to the approval of the Commander-in-Chief, in an order dated 24th November 1857, and remained in that capacity until the army reached Nusseerabad.

At the end of the year he proceeded to Neemuch with a detached field force, and in January 1858, was appointed Assistant Executive Engineer, Rajpootana Field Force, by order of Brigadier-General Lawrence, C.B. (now Sir George Lawrence), Governor-General's Agent for Rajpootana, on a salary of 200 rupees per month in addition to his regimental pay and allowances.

In the month of May, his health failing from constant exposure and over-exertion, he was sent to the hills for change of air, and while there, the Governor in Council was pleased to appoint him Executive Engineer, R.F.F., on a salary of about 1000 rupees a-month.

The Executive Engineer of Rajpootana has charge of Nusseerabad, Neemuch, Ajmere, and six other Cantonments, dispersed over an area of 119,000 square miles, as well as the lines

of road through that district, and this appointment was held by Captain Sprot until May 1860, when ill-health compelled him to return to England on medical certificate. The following extracts from letters and testimonials speak to the manner in which he carried on his duties as Engineer during the two and a-half years that he was employed there.

Lieut.-Colonel Munbee, Superintending Engineer of the Northern Circle, forwarded copies of three letters, with his, dated 7th August 1858, and wrote in paragraph 2 of it—"It gives me great pleasure to be the channel through which you receive this most favourable notice of the principal Civil and Military Authorities of the Bombay Presidency, to add my humble testimony of the difficulties you met with and overcame so well, and to return my thanks for the gentlemanly spirit of cordial co-operation I have experienced from you from the commencement of our official intercourse to the present time."

The first enclosure is dated 22nd June 1858, and is from Major-General Roberts, Commanding the Rajpootana Field Force, to the Quartermaster-General of the Army. The following is a copy of the 3rd paragraph:—"To Lieut. Sprot of the 83rd Regiment, Assistant Executive Engineer, who had the *entire charge* of constructing barracks at Neemuch, not less praise is due. Thrown entirely on his own resources, and from want of a subordinate Establishment, obliged to superintend every detail in person, this officer had completed four barracks (commenced on 15th February) by the middle of last month (April), and two more were well advanced. As far as I can judge, these barracks will last for an indefinite period, and so long as they do last, no better accommodation for the European troops could be desired."

The second enclosure is a letter dated 7th July 1858, from the Quartermaster-General of the Army to the Secretary to Government, submitting by desire of the Commander-in-Chief of the Bombay Army (Sir Henry Somerset), Major-General Roberts' letter for favourable notice by the Governor in Council.

The third enclosure is the resolution of Government on this letter, and is dated Bombay Castle, 24th July 1858. After speaking of the "*energy and ability* displayed by Captain Munbee and Lieut. Sprot" in the 1st paragraph, the 2nd is as follows:—"Copies of Lieut.-Colonel Phayre's (Quartermaster-General) and Major-General Roberts' letter should be forwarded to the Government of India, who should be informed with reference to the arrangements reported in the letter to the

Government, No. 1523, dated 29th May 1858, that the instances of Lieut. Sprot's *intelligence and efficiency* noticed in them is *not the first* for which he has obtained the commendations of the Bombay Government." Letter from the Government of India to the Government of Bombay, No. 4124, of 26th August 1858, "notices with much gratification the testimony borne by the Military Authorities to the *energy and ability* displayed by Lieut. Sprot" of the 83rd Regiment, in providing cover for the European troops in Rajpootana during the Mutiny.

After returning to England, Captain Sprot commanded the depôt of his regiment for upwards of two years, he then proceeded to Aldershot and Sheffield, in which latter place he frequently commanded the wing of his regiment for periods of a few weeks at a time.

The whole of his baggage, valued at about £500, was lost on the passage from India, and with it all his instruments, plans, books, papers, and many testimonials, but verified copies of most of these latter remain in his possession, and in the foregoing summary, no reference has been made to any but those that can be produced in full.

Captain Sprot received the India War Medal for his services during the Mutiny, was present in one action, and marched many thousands of miles with troops in Central India, between June 1857 and 1860.

APPENDIX II.

LIEUTENANT-GENERAL SPROT.

Reprinted, by permission, from "The Cosmopolitan," 1885.

LIEUTENANT-GENERAL SPROT joined the 83rd Regiment, afterwards "County of Dublin," and now 1st Battalion Royal Irish Rifles, as Ensign in September 1848, and, after a varied service of forty years, retired from the army with the rank of Lieutenant-General at the end of 1887.

He is the eldest son of the late Mark Sprot of Riddell, Roxburgh, N.B., who was educated at Trinity College, Cambridge, and was J.P., Deputy-Lieutenant, and Commissioner of Supply for that county, by Elizabeth, daughter of John Shewell of Sutton Park, Surrey, and was born in March 1830. He was educated for his profession partly at a preparatory academy for Addiscombe, and partly in Germany. On reaching his regiment—November 1848—then quartered at Fermoy and Cork, he found himself at once in the midst of that Irish rebellion in which Smith O'Brien took so prominent a part; but, in consequence of the reverses which had been met with by our army in the Punjab about that time, the 83rd, together with the 64th and 75th Regiments, were ordered to India, and he embarked with a detachment on 17th March of the following year. Arriving at Bombay on the 20th June, he found he had, in the interim of the voyage round the Cape of Good Hope, been promoted to the rank of Lieutenant, and was honoured by being, immediately after landing, posted to the light company of his corps, to the Captaincy of which company he was also appointed after many years. During the early part of his Indian career he devoted much of his time to sporting (*shikar*), and, being a very good shot and an excellent horseman, was most successful in pursuit both of large and small game. He rode the winning horse in an unusual number of flat races in the different cantonments of the Bombay Presidency, and was

a successful pigsticker. In regimental games he excelled, and was the captain of the eleven of his regiment at cricket, as well as of his own light company, for several years.

After five years' service in Scinde and Goojerat, Lieutenant Sprot obtained permission, in the spring of 1858, to attend the Central Military College at Poona (founded by Lord Frederick Fitzclarence), and, leaving Deesa, where he was then quartered, he proceeded to Bombay for that purpose. Before the expiration of many months, the high position he took in all the subjects there taught attracted the attention of the Government of Bombay, and, long before the expiration of the term, he received, quite unsolicited, the offer of a good appointment in the Public Works Department, which he accepted, and, after passing an examination in the following subjects with *éclat*, he received certificates of proficiency for each, and proceeded to take up his new duties:— Surveying, levelling with all instruments, mapping, plotting, and drawing; algebra, geometry, trigonometry, and mixed mathematics; thorough acquaintance with field and permanent fortification, including the tracing in the field under fire, and practical construction of field works; and last, though in India not least, a thorough acquaintance with hydraulics and hydraulic engineering. After employment for some months on works of minor importance, including some irrigation works at the foot of Purindhur and some miles of road between Poona and Sattarah, for which he designed, drew, and estimated for the bridges and culverts, &c., Lieutenant Sprot was sent to the Ahmednuggar Collectorate in May 1856, to construct a line of banked roadway from that town towards Mhow and Delhi. 26 miles of this he had executed by the end of September; and Mr Fraser Tytler, the Collector of the district, in reporting to Government, wrote of "the very valuable and efficient services rendered by Lieutenant Sprot to the district of this Zillah by the work on which he has been employed;" and to Lieutenant Sprot himself he wrote, "You commenced it under every disadvantage, nevertheless, in four and a-half months you have completed more than 26 miles over nearly the worst country we have. I have twice visited the new line; it seems to me an excellent one, and I am glad to find myself borne out in this by Colonel Walter Scott, the chief engineer" (nephew of Sir Walter Scott). In a further letter to the Secretary to Government, the same officer expressed himself as follows:— "Lieutenant Sprot has, in an *incredibly short space of time*, done now nearly 26 miles of this line." This resulted in Lieutenant Sprot receiving, towards the end of the year, through the regular

official channel, a copy of the following resolution of Government, dated Bombay Castle, 10th October 1856:—"The Right Honourable the Governor in Council is anxious, though the public works are at present suspended, that the execution of so much of this work (a road from Ahmednuggar to Mhow) as can be undertaken by Lieutenant Sprot be entrusted to him," on the works being resumed.

When the works were resumed, however, in the spring of the following year, Lieutenant Sprot was ordered to construct a line of raised roadway, 30 feet wide, complete with bridges, culverts, and drains, and fully metalled or gravelled. The line was about 27 miles, reaching from near Ahmednuggar to Toka, on the banks of the Godavery, towards Aurungabad. At Toka he had to erect a flying bridge of 1005 feet span. The time allowed for the completion of this road was three years. Having carefully examined the estimates and calculations, and being asked by the chief engineer how much money he would require before the expiration of the official year, he replied, "I will require it all. I will complete the road in three months." Incredible as this appeared at the time, Lieutenant Sprot kept his word, only two large bridges of five 60-feet arches each remaining unfinished; and, on 8th June 1857, the Mutiny having broken out, he marched the Central India Field Force—artillery, cavalry, and impedimenta—over it from one end to the other. After crossing the Godavery he went forward with the force into Aurungabad, then in the hands of the rebels, and took part in the engagement there.

The secret of Lieutenant Sprot's success, and the marvellous rapidity with which he completed his works, is to be found mainly in the fact of his refusing to make use of any but absolutely free labour in a part of the world where free labour had never before been known. When thoroughly understood—which took some little time—the numbers of men and women who flocked to his standard were far in excess of the numbers he could employ, and multitudes of those, who had in many cases travelled over a hundred miles, were forced to retrace their steps. It is often said of the natives of India that "gratitude" is not to be found in their vocabulary; such certainly was not Lieutenant Sprot's experience, and the following anecdote of a circumstance which occurred on the first line of road on which he was employed might prove interesting:—Notices were placed in conspicuous places in the surrounding villages calling for work-people; they were informed in them that, if they engaged, they would be paid for every day they worked; that they were free to go when they

liked and come back when they chose, but in return for their wages a good day's work would be demanded of them; and further, that they might appoint their own headmen of gangs. For several weeks none came; then a few applied and were set to work; soon this number increased, and in a short time, the fame of the new system having gone abroad, so many asked employment that it was impossible to provide tools for them. The amount of their task was by no means small, but they did it cheerfully.

Now, one day the public works were suspended, and the money had come to an end, and, though 26 miles had been covered from beginning to end, 3 miles of heavy and irregular banking in the middle had, from unavoidable reasons, remained unexecuted. Lieutenant Sprot proceeded to inform his people there was now no more money for them, and, addressing the headmen of gangs, he said, "If you all remain and work for nothing as hard as usual, you will be able to complete this piece in three days. I have done the best I could for you while I have been with you; I now wish you adieu, and will never return here again unless you call me to see the road finished." On the fourth day they brought him from his tents to show him the work done—and for nothing.

At this time (June 1857) the public works were suspended in consequence of the Mutiny, and Lieutenant Sprot was ordered to rejoin his regiment, which had then taken the field in Rajpootana. He therefore left Ahmednuggar, receiving from the commanding engineer and others many flattering testimonials for "his zeal, intelligence, attention to his work, aptitude for design, and taste for his adopted profession."

On reaching Poona the rainy season had set in, and, availing himself of a month's enforced leisure, he prepared himself for the very severe engineer's examination held there that year, at which many English civil engineers competed; and, being an excellent mathematician, he passed with great credit. The result was communicated to him in a "Government Resolution," dated Bombay Castle, 5th September 1857:—"Lieutenant Sprot, who has shown himself a very useful officer in the Public Works Department, has satisfactorily passed his examination; and though present circumstances (the Mutiny) prevent his employment at present, Government will be glad to avail themselves of *any opportunity* of employing him hereafter."

On passing through Bombay immediately after this, he was offered his choice of an adjutancy of Goojerat Horse, or an

appointment as Assistant Political Agent in one of the disturbed districts in Central India, and would gladly have accepted the latter; but, in consequence of the paucity of officers with his regiment, the Commander-in-Chief desired he should rejoin it, which he proceeded to do forthwith. On reaching Ahmedabad, he found a company of his regiment which had just lost its captain; this he took command of, and marched to Deesa. On arriving there, the report of a rising at Mount Aboo sanatorium had just reached the cantonment, and Lieutenant Sprot asked and obtained permission to proceed with a company to reinforce the garrison. Shortly afterwards, on a field force being formed under Brig.-General Tydell to proceed into Rajpootana, he was appointed Brigade-Major to the same. In January 1858 he was nominated "Staff Officer" to a mixed force of all arms, which was despatched to Neemuch to take possession of that cantonment, it having been destroyed by rebels; and this duty he performed, in addition to being adjutant of the detachment of Europeans. Very shortly afterwards, in February of the same year, he was asked by General Sir George Lawrence, K.C.S.I., then Governor-General's Agent for Rajpootana, to take up the duties of Assistant Executive Engineer, Rajpootana Field Force, and to construct barracks, &c., for a European regiment and battery of artillery, as well as to rebuild the public buildings, which had been destroyed by the mutineers. This he accepted, and carried out in addition to all his other military duties.

Of his success in this capacity his (engineer) chief, General Munbee, on the 7th August 1858, wrote, "It gives me great pleasure to be the channel through which you receive this most favourable notice of the principal civil and military authorities of the Bombay Presidency, to add my humble testimony of the difficulties you met with and overcame so well, and to return my thanks for the gentlemanly spirit of cordial co-operation I have experienced from you from the commencement of our official intercourse to the present time." General Roberts, commanding in Rajpootana, wrote, "To Lieutenant Sprot, 83rd Regiment, Assistant Ex-Engineer, R. F. F., who had the entire charge of constructing barracks at Neemuch, not less praise is due. Thrown entirely on his own resources, and from want of a subordinate establishment obliged to superintend every detail in person, this officer had completed four barracks, commenced on 15th February, by the middle of last month, April, and two more were well advanced. As far as I can judge, no better accommodation for European troops could be desired." The Quartermaster-General

of the Army, by desire of the Commander-in-Chief, brought this to the notice of the Bombay Government, who passed a resolution, dated Bombay Castle, 24th July 1858, as follows:—"Copies of the Quartermaster-General's and General Roberts' letters should be forwarded to the Government of India, who should be informed with reference to arrangements reported in the letter to Government, No. 1523, that the instances of Lieutenant Sprot's intelligence and efficiency noticed in them is not the first for which he has obtained the commendations of the Bombay Government." Letter, 26th August 1858, from the supreme Government of India: —"Notice with much gratification the testimony borne by the military authorities to the energy and ability displayed by Lieutenant Sprot." In May he was rewarded for his "untiring exertions" by promotion to Executive Engineer of Rajpootana, with charge of the fortifications, European and native cantonments, military roads and buildings in the district, extending over 119,000 square miles.

For his war services during the Mutiny Captain Sprot received the "Indian War" Medal 1857-58.

The exposure and trials to which he had been subjected during three years' service in the field, spent mostly under canvas or under trees, were not without their effect upon this officer's constitution; and, in May 1860, after twelve years' uninterrupted service in India, he sought and obtained leave to return to England.

After his arrival at home, he was granted six months' leave of absence, and during that time was present at the first great Volunteer Reviews held in Hyde Park in June, and in Edinburgh on 7th August of the same year. At once he realised the immense advantage to the country of the movement, and ever after watched it with keen interest. In 1861 he joined the depôt of his regiment at Chatham, where he took up photography, especially with reference to the dry plate system, then in its infancy, and worked it out with considerable success afterwards in his travels. In 1862, his regiment having then returned from India, he joined Headquarters at Dover, and in 1863 proceeded with them to Shorncliffe.

General Sprot has always been a strong advocate for short service in the army, and, as long ago as 1862, and even 1858, he argued in favour of a private's term being reduced to no more than eight years, though he is now fully convinced that less than half that time is more than sufficient. At the end of 1863 he was selected again to command the depôt, and

returned to Chatham for the second time. In the following year he rejoined Headquarters at Aldershot with the depôt, then to be abolished, and went through a series of drills and manœuvres there. 1866 saw him in Ireland, and he took an active part in the suppression of the Fenian insurrection in and around Dublin in the winter of 1866-67. He obtained his majority in February 1867, and went with his corps to Gibraltar in the *Himalaya* immediately afterwards. In the summer of that year he obtained permission to retire on temporary half-pay, on which he remained for eighteen months, and during this interlude he visited the principal capitals and armies of Europe, including those of Norway and Sweden, Denmark, Russia, Austria, France, Algeria, Spain, and Portugal, travelling in Russia as far as Moscow, and visiting Petersburg, Trondhjem, Stockholm, Copenhagen, Schleswig-Holstein, Hamburg, Berlin, Paris, Lisbon, Madrid, and many other places. His love of service soon impelled him, however, to rejoin the active army, and in 1869 he buckled on the claymore of the 91st Highlanders (Argyllshire), and before the close of the year succeeded to the command of that splendid corps, which he retained until the beginning of 1876. The 91st was the first regiment to receive and wear the valise equipment instead of the old knapsack, and the march which it made fully equipped in these valises from Dover to Aldershot in June 1870 became a matter of history. At this time a radical change was made in the drill and evolution of the army, and a new drill book published; the 91st under Colonel Sprot, and the 4th Regiment under Colonel Cameron, C.B., were selected for the experiments. Colonel Sprot was always much impressed with the necessity of a more thorough instruction, both of officers and men, in their military duties than was then usual, and while in command of his regiment he carried out this principle thoroughly and successfully. Not only was every recruit taught his drill and musketry, but each individual man, before being dismissed, was systematically instructed, and subsequently examined, in gun drill, field and garrison, camping, cooking, tent-pitching, hasty entrenchments, and the construction of redoubts, &c., fire-engine drill, signalling with flags and lamp, and various other useful details of their profession. The officers were instructed in minor tactics by using the "Kriegspiel," as well as continual practice in the open country, and were put to the test by periodical extensive regimental manœuvres both by day and night. Very interesting details of these field days and night attacks are given in the *Scotsman* and other newspapers, as executed in the surrounding

districts when the corps was quartered in Edinburgh Castle in 1873-74.

Probably this regiment, while under Colonel Sprot, was the first that recognised the advantage of a night attack, or at least the necessity of being prepared to resist one, and it commenced to practise systematically at Fort George, the first one on a large scale being on 2nd November 1872. The nights selected for these exercises were those which were dark and stormy; and, as usual with these Highlanders, no notice was given them before the bugles sounded the "fall-in" and "cloak;" yet there was no shirking, all fell in quietly and quickly, and cheerfully followed their Colonel out into the wet and the darkness.

When the 91st were quartered at Aldershot in 1871, the wedding of the Princess Louise and the Marquis of Lorne took place at Windsor, and Lieut.-Colonel Sprot requested permission to furnish from the Argyllshire Highlanders under his command a guard of honour on the occasion. On the afternoon of the day preceding the marriage, Colonel Sprot, accompanied by some of his officers, the Sergt.-Major and Pipe-Major, were granted an audience of the Queen at the Castle, and presented the wedding gifts of the regiment to the Princess; and Her Majesty afterwards, to commemorate the event, gave the regiment the additional title of "Princess Louise" Argyllshire Highlanders, and permission to add to their colours the cypher "L" of the Princess (in three corners), and at the bottom the badge of the boar's head of the Campbells, surrounded by the motto, "Ne obliviscaris."

After being in command of the 91st Highlanders for nearly seven years, Colonel Sprot was appointed Assistant-Adjutant and Quartermaster-General for Scotland at Edinburgh. The field day over Arthur's Seat on the Queen's Birthday 1876, under General Ramsay Stuart, C.B., commanding in Scotland, where the sham fight extended from Duddingston to Holyrood, and where that fine body of men, the Edinburgh Artillery Militia, received praise for the manner in which they, with drag-ropes alone, hauled their heavy ordnance from Leith to the top of Dunsappie, and where the 1st Midlothian Rifle Volunteers behaved so well, was organised by him, and will be long remembered in Edinburgh and the district. It was probably the first instance of Line, Militia, and Volunteer soldiers being brigaded and co-operating together in Scotland—the regiment quartered in the Castle, the cavalry at Jock's Lodge, and the Royal Artillery from Leith Fort taking part in the manœuvres also.

The organisation of the troops, which included all the depôts

in Scotland, which lined the streets in Edinburgh when the Queen went from Holyrood to Charlotte Square to unveil the monument of the late Prince Consort, and in Glasgow for the Prince and Princess of Wales to lay the foundation stone of the new Post Office there, as also the arrangements for the Volunteer Reviews in the King's Park and Glasgow Green, on the same day when so many of the Lanarkshire and other Volunteer regiments appeared to such advantage, were made by that officer.

In April 1878 Colonel Sprot was given the command of the 47th Sub-District Brigade at Maidstone, and afterwards the 31st Surrey (South London) District at Kingston-on-Thames. In 1880 he commanded a brigade at the Brighton Review, where 22,000 much maligned Volunteers surprised both their friends and their enemies by their smartness, orderly behaviour, and endurance. In 1881 he took part in the Royal Windsor Volunteer (coming of age) Review, commanding the Surrey Brigade in the Division of the Duke of Connaught; and he was also present in that year on the occasion of the Scotch Volunteer Review in Edinburgh on the memorable 25th August. In 1882 he headed his Surrey Brigade at the Portsmouth Review; and at the end of that year, his time of command having expired, he relinquished his charge at Kingston-on-Thames, and was subsequently promoted in due course to be Major-General.

Colonel Sprot was probably one of the first officers who perceived the immense use (not yet fully developed) that bicycles and tricycles might be put to in the army. He brought the matter forward as far back as 1881 in the cycling press of the day, but received at that time anything but encouragement. In a circular of the same year to his brigade on "Drill and Evolutions," he also urged, with some force, the desirability of their making use of a few cyclists.

Lieutenant-General Sprot is the writer of many useful military pamphlets, most of which have been favourably noticed in the leading daily and the military weekly papers. That on Outpost Duty, &c., written in 1872, formed for some time the text-book of many Volunteer and Militia regiments. In 1874 he wrote an essay in competition for the Gold Medal of the Royal United Service Institution, which he was subsequently induced to publish, under the title of *How our Army may be largely increased and greatly improved without Conscription.* He wrote a *Drill for use with Fire Engines*, which was much used in civil as well as military quarters. He places great faith in the *careful* and *patient* use of the Kriegspiel (war game) to instruct regimental officers

and non-commissioned officers; and when umpire-in-chief at the Curragh in 1875, he published a little pamphlet to facilitate its use. He had printed and circulated several papers amongst the Militia and Volunteers under his command, one of the most useful being on *Interior Economy and Drill of the Auxiliary Forces*, issued at Kingston-on-Thames in 1878. His report on the manœuvres of the Surrey Brigade on Wimbledon Common on the Queen's Birthday 1880, gained for him the encomiums, not only of the daily and military papers of this country, but also those of the United States. He has, besides the above, written several other papers on military subjects, including a revision of the Standing Orders of the 91st Highlanders when they were under his command.

General Sprot excelled in the use of the Government military rifle, and has taken several prizes. He is a Magistrate and a Commissioner of Supply for Roxburghshire, where he resides.

MEMO.

The foregoing history was reprinted and sent to the 1st and 2nd Battalions of the Argyll and Sutherland Highlanders, with the following "Preface" on General Sprot being appointed Honorary Colonel of that Regiment.

[PREFACE.

PREFACE.

ON reading (or hearing of) the Gazette of the 2nd May 1905, in which Lt.-General Sprot was appointed Honorary Colonel of the Princess Louise's Argyll and Sutherland Highlanders, many non-commissioned officers, rank and file, and, probably, a few young officers belonging to the Regiment, will quite naturally ask themselves, "What manner of man is this whom the King has appointed to be our Honorary Colonel?" But few will be able to answer the question, except, perhaps, some old people of the 1st Battalion. I, therefore, think that it might not come amiss if I had a few copies reprinted and circulated amongst them of a short History of myself, which was published some twenty years ago, viz.—in 1885, in a monthly London periodical, *The Cosmopolitan*, under, I think, the heading of "Distinguished Indian Officers Past and Present," part of which had previously appeared in a Glasgow weekly newspaper, *The Military Record*, which was published with a cartoon of myself on 2nd November 1881.

In reading my Indian experience, some may say, "But what has all this to do with a soldier's life? This is civilian's work." These, I will ask to remember that this civilian work, so to speak, was carried out in time of war quite alone (by myself) in the heart of the enemy's country, and for military purposes, and that the danger and risk run was far greater than that of an officer serving with his Regiment in the field in the ordinary way. It should also be known that, though employed in the erection of barracks for troops as well as being in charge of the fortifications, I had to take the field in the position of R.E. with any of the forces that entered my district.

Shortly before retiring from the Service with honorary rank and a pension in 1887, I succeeded in 1884 to the large estate of Riddell, where I was brought up from childhood. It is situated on the Scottish Borders, south of the Tweed, but north of the Cheviots, and there I have spent with my family the later days of my life. Assisted by a faithful overseer, I myself took charge of my own broad acres, and have personally managed the place ever since.

Becoming a Justice of the Peace and Deputy Lieutenant, I have, with other country gentlemen, attended to the business of the county—Magistrate's work, County Council, District Committee, Chairman of Parish Council, of Heritors, and of School Board, Public Health, Small Holdings, Road Board, &c., &c.

As an old officer, I have (as all of us should do) looked after the interests of the old soldiers within touch of me, and am always open to listen to their plaints and alleviate their suffering where possible. For many years I have been a working member of the "Soldiers' and Sailors' Families Associations" (Scottish Branch), of which Her Royal Highness The Princess Louise, our much beloved Patron, is such an excellent President—I myself being President of the Counties of Roxburghshire and Selkirkshire under her.

As to my amusements, though, as some may still remember, I was once perhaps one of the best shots in the 91st Highlanders; my eyesight has rendered it necessary for me now to lock up my guns and rifles in a glass case. For the same reason my fishing rods, both salmon and trout, rest beside them, but driving, cycling, and motoring are still my delight.

And here at Riddell I shall probably finish out a life which, through zeal and devotion to the service of my Queen and country, unceasing activity of purpose, a simple and abstemious life, the help of a devoted wife, a very high sense of duty, from the carrying out of which I have never flinched, and the blessing of Almighty God, could scarcely, by any means, have been more propitious than it has been.

J. SPROT,
Honorary Colonel,
Princess Louise's Argyll and Sutherland Highlanders.


ARGYLL & SUTHERLAND HIGHLANDERS
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